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VOL. II - Part I

ENGLISH WRITERS.

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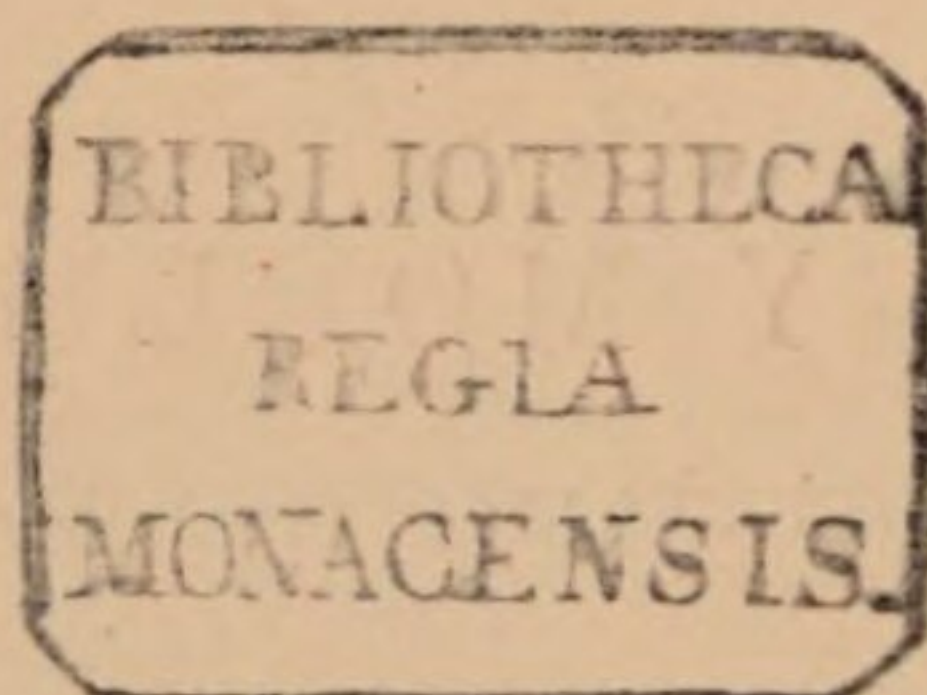
FROM CHAUCER TO DUNBAR.

By HENRY MORLEY

PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH LITERATURE IN UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, LONDON

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1867.

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TO
THE REV. J. S. BREWER, M.A.,

PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH LITERATURE, KING'S COLLEGE,
LONDON ; AND READER AT THE ROLLS.

MY DEAR BREWER,

It was you, when in 1857 you drew me into the work of discussing English Writers in the Evening Classes at King's College, who doubled for me an old pleasure by making it a duty, and gave system to what had been a mere enjoyment of the study represented by this book. If I am the book's father, you therefore are its grandfather ; and in that kinship let me find excuse for dedicating it, with all its faults, to a genial and thorough scholar, by whose unremitting labour some of the chief paths to a true knowledge of our History and Literature have been made plain.

Now I have passed out of one College into another with which I am less allied by old associations, more by nature. Having many friendships in each of them among teachers and students, I could bear witness, if that were needed, to the ripening of any crude antagonism of the past between these two great institutions into a generous and friendly emulation, as of earnest fellow-labourers, each in his own distinct part of the common harvest-field. Of this, as well as of more personal feeling, it is at any rate pleasant to think that there may be some outward sign in dedication of these pages to the Professor of English Literature at King's College by his sincere friend

HENRY MORLEY.

*University College, London,
April, 1867.*

P R E F A C E.

THIS work was described in its first Preface as an attempt to tell, with something of the sustained interest of national biography, the story of the English mind. It was limited to three volumes, but the first, being thick, has been reissued in two parts, each giving a distinct section, with an index, and the other two will be divided in like manner. Thus far the story has passed through more than a thousand years, and our literature has been sketched from the Earliest Times to the Invention of Printing. I reach only to the young days of Dunbar, who is the next great poet after Chaucer. The four centuries from then till now have yet to be accounted for.

The division into three volumes was chosen because it accords best with the arrangement of our literature which is here adopted, and of which it was the purpose of the Introduction to suggest the nature and the use. The first volume told of the whole period of the Formation of the Language. When the record had reached Chaucer it was ready to pass into the second period, "that of Italian influence, felt even in Chaucer's day, but more fairly inaugurated by the 'company of courtly makers' who preceded the age of Elizabeth." In the first volume, therefore, no account of Chaucer was included. The little that was said of him was said only to indicate that we at last had come into his presence.

Having regard also to the purpose of that volume, the discussion in the latter part of it was limited to those English writers who, like the author of the 'Vision of Piers Plowman,' were uninfluenced by contact with Italian literature. But the men who were discussed towards the close of the preceding book form one group with the men who are connected in the

earlier chapters of this volume with the dawning of Italian influence.

The whole period of Italian influence will be described in one large volume, of which this is the first instalment. The complete plan of the narrative has been present to me from the beginning, and I hope, when all is done, that, from the chosen point of view, its argument will be found to have been sketched in fair perspective. As we pass into the throng of more recent and more familiar writers, the greater fulness of significant detail should make it possible, from the date of the accession of Elizabeth, to reproduce the literary life of England in successive periods, and come the more readily face to face with our great authors. If we have more to see, our travelling will have become easier when once we get into the peopled highways of our later literature.

H. M.

• 4, *Upper Park Road, Haverstock Hill,*
April, 1867.

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ADDITIONS.

Page 151, 9th line from the bottom, insert the sentence:—In 1357, upon two leaves of a household account recently discovered by Mr. E. A. Bond, Keeper of the MSS. in the British Museum, Geoffrey Chaucer was twice mentioned in connexion with the household of Prince Lionel.¹

¹ *Fortnightly Review*, No. xxxi., for August 15, 1866.—In rebinding Additional MS. 18,632 it was found that the old binding had been lined with two parchment leaves of a short Household Account, which Mr. Bond rightly infers, from various points of evidence well pieced together, to record expenses for the years 1356-59 of Elizabeth, wife of Edward III.'s second son, Prince Lionel, who was within those years sometimes at London, Reading, Windsor, and elsewhere, but chiefly resident at Hatfield, in Yorkshire. Among the entries on these leaves is one for April, 1357, when the Countess was equipping herself for a celebration of the Feast of St. George, at Windsor, of a paddock or short cloak, a pair of red and black breeches, with shoes, for Geoffrey Chaucer, also articles of dress for Philippa Pan', that syllable being interpreted by Mr. Bond as, perhaps, Panetaria, or Mistress of the Pantry. On the 20th of May, 1357, some article of dress, of which the name is lost by defect in the leaf, was bought for Chaucer. In December, 1357, a man received money for accompanying Philippa Pan' from Pollesdon (whatever that may mean) to Hatfield, and immediately afterwards there is an entry of three shillings and sixpence to Geoffrey Chaucer for necessaries. At this time an entry shows that Prince John of Gaunt was a visitor at Hatfield. That is all that concerns Chaucer.

In April, 1358, at the equipping of the Countess for the Feast of St. George, at Windsor, there is entry of payment for a bodice lined with fur, for Philippa Pan', but no entry for Chaucer, nor does Chaucer's name appear among the other entries.

In 1358, as the text shows, Chaucer was attached to John of Gaunt, and assisting at his courtship of the Duchess Blanche, by writing for him 'The Assembly of Foules' and 'The Complaint of the Black Knight.' The new fact, therefore, is, that Chaucer, possibly in his known quality of court page, was in attendance on Prince Lionel and his wife, in and before 1357, though it is quite as possible that he might have been detached for service of the Countess upon her coming to London, and preparing for St. George's Day at Windsor.

The preceding sentence and note would have been included in the text if the account there given of the Life of Chaucer had not gone to press before the appearance of No. 31 of the 'Fortnightly Review.'

Page 335, line 5, after '*Parson's Tale*,' insert:—suggested by some chapters of the '*Somme des Vices et des Vertues*,' written by Friar Lorens, or Laurentius, in 1279, for Philip II. of France, and translated into English by Dan Michel as the '*Ayenbite of Inwit*.'²

² See Preface to Mr. Morris's edition of the '*Ayenbite of Inwit*,' or Remorse of Conscience. It is the work translated by Caxton as '*The Royal Book, or a Book for a King*.'

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ENGLISH WRITERS.

BOOK II.

Period of Italian Influence.

CHAPTER I.

OUR Writers before Chaucer were men speaking the mind of the country during the period of the formation of the language, either in Latin, the common tongue of ^{English} Chaucer. the learned, or in Anglo-Saxon, or in Anglo-Norman, or in English of which the original elements were so variously proportioned and so incompletely blended that it differs much from English of to-day. But with occasional impediment of a word that has passed out of use, the language of Chaucer, and those of his contemporaries who did not, like the author of 'Piers Plowman,' write in the less developed English of a rural district, speaks to us all yet with a living warmth. With Gower and Chaucer, therefore, begins the literature of formed English; and as the best fruit of John Gower's genius is contained not in his English, but in his Latin poetry, it is by common consent to Geoffrey Chaucer that we now look back as to the very spring and well of English undefiled.

But our Chaucer was only a middle link in a long chain. Before his birth the literature of this country had maintained for a longer time than has passed since his birth a foremost place in the intellectual history of Europe. To say nothing of the yet earlier Beowulf, English Cædmon poured the soul of a Christian poet into noble song six hundred and fifty years

before Chaucer was born. Six centuries before Chaucer, Bede, foremost of Christian scholars, was the historian of England, and Chaucer wrote his 'Canterbury Tales' not quite five centuries ago. It would take only seven men living to the age of eighty to transmit from father to son memories of Chaucer himself at his prime. Every man of fifty has lived through more than a tenth of the time since the 'Canterbury Tales' were written. It is only because we have done so much during these five centuries, and every stroke of the work has told upon our present, that we are content to look on Wiclif, Chaucer, Gower, and the author of 'Piers Plowman' as men of a remote time who lived in the dim caves about the bubbling sources of our literature. They did not live at the sources of our literature, and they are not remote. Their aspirations were ours, their ways of thinking ours, their battle ours, except that we have the advantage of a few points gained.

With Chaucer our own day begins; but he is not the day-spring of our literature. Long before Chaucer, Alcuin gave light from the English mind to the empire of Charlemagne. It was our Geoffrey of Monmouth who, suddenly invading the sober domain of the chroniclers with a gay troop of masquerading fancies, gave European fame to King Arthur. And when these had grown to a strong body of romance, it was our Walter Map who, with the spiritual breath of his own genius, put into them a Christian soul. In prose and verse for century after century before the time of Chaucer there was a literature here of homespeaking earnestness, practical wit and humour, that attacked substantial ills of life; sturdy resistance against tyrannies in Church and State; and, as the root of all its strength, a faithful reverence for God. With all this, Chaucer was in harmony; and so too, as we shall find, have been our best writers of every succeeding generation. For in our literature, which is but our voice as a people, the mind speaks that has so laboured as to win for England, almost alone among the nations, the inheritance of an inalienable freedom.

Yet besides the fact of his having been best of the first who wrote formed English, there is a sense in which we may justly date from Chaucer the modern literature of England. The story of our successive writers does, in cer-

The Italian
Revival.

tain respects, take a new departure from occurrences on which we must now pause.

After that active period of the seed-time of new literature which nearly corresponds to the reign of Henry II. in England and of Barbarossa in Germany, when Reineke Fuchs was first current among the Flemings and the Germans and the French, the time of the epic shaping, not only of the more courtly King Arthur romances, but also of the *Nibelungenlied* and the romance of the Cid Campeador, there was noble evidence in such works as these of the development of a true and sound sense of literature among the chief nations of Europe. Then it was that the warm blood of the great common heart began to circulate among the feebler graces of court poetry, until by the Sicilian throne of Barbarossa's grandson, Frederick II., began the new life of thought on the old Latin soil. Italy presently gave Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio as the three Patriarchs of modern literature in almost all Europe. And the literary Haran of these Patriarchs was the Sicilian kingdom.

The Italian Revival spread its influence so widely over Europe that we may now look back to it from almost any point, whether we be English or French, German or Spanish, as to the first great landmark that shows we are running home into the port of modern literary history. Modern, properly means that which is of "modo," or just now; and in that sense we should feel the term. The successive lives of only nine old men lie between us and Barbarossa himself, and we date this modern literature from the time only of Barbarossa's grandson. Out of the movement of thought at his Sicilian Court came in a few years even eclipse to the traditional glories of the old classical time, and a greater than Virgil honoured Virgil as his guide. The new life was strong by union of the courtly graces of the south with the popular mind of the free cities of Lombardy, of daintiness of luxury with energy of labour. Now it is through Gower and Chaucer, who wrote while Petrarch and Boccaccio yet lived, and who were born within seven years after the death of Dante, that the influence of the three great Patriarchs of Modern Literature first passed into England.

Italy kept the lead, as we shall find, until after the death of Tasso,—counting thirty years to a generation, eight or nine

generations ago,—when there was left only the gleaning of her harvest-field. During the time of her wealth and predominance,—except during our civil wars, when blood ran more freely than ink, and they who, in England, went anywhere, went commonly to their death in battle,—our cultivated men travelled to Italy as to the best foreign school of life and manners. Englishmen have always been peculiarly apt to find what pleased them in the example of their neighbours, and they owe this to their insular position. For to be insular means to live at the centre of a thousand free sea-roads to all the corners of the world, and to know nothing of the isolation suffered by the country whose overland travellers come under new dominion wherever they may step across their frontier. To be insular is to have free access to every coast; is to be cosmopolitan. They who are earthed in are the true hermits; and so, while every literature of Europe is affected more or less strongly by foreign influences, that of commercial, travel-loving England has especially been coloured by our intercourse with other lands.

When Italy ruled the world of letters, Englishmen learnt Italian as they now learn French, and, next to the ancient Latins, looked to the revived Latins, the Italians, for good reading. In Chaucer's time begins this period of Italian influence upon the form—but not the soul—of English literature; although, distinctly as it was felt in Chaucer's day, it was more perfectly inaugurated by "the company of courtly makers" who preceded the age of Elizabeth. And so, if we date modern literature, as is commonly and fairly done, from that Italian revival of letters which gave birth to the genius of Dante, it is in the day of Chaucer that the English chapters of its story must begin.

But necessary as it is to recognise and define the foreign influences upon external forms of every national literature, while so doing it cannot be too often repeated that no country's writer, whose works live and will live, has been created or essentially changed by casting in a foreign mould. The metal is the same, whatever the shape of the ingot. Beef is beef, whether cooked after the manner of the Italian, French, or English kitchens; and the several flavours of beef, pork, and blackcock are not more distinct and inconvertible than the inherent characters of English, Italian, French, or any other

Limits of
Foreign in-
fluence on
English
Literature.

literatures. As for us, it has been seen that we had before Chaucer a literature so large, various, and worthy in its aims, that a nation with nothing else to show might point to it with a just pride. No other country has for the same period as noble a literature to produce, and certainly no other people, having it, would be so careless of its memory as, until lately, Englishmen have been. That old literature of ours is, let it be again said, one in spirit with the latest and all intervening forms of English thought. Even in Chaucer's lifetime it was being continued through a work of highest mark, 'The Vision of Piers Plowman,' without touch from a breath of foreign inspiration. Upon Chaucer himself also, as upon all our great writers who followed him, the utmost foreign influence determining the form of a work was powerless to destroy the essential qualities that make part of the English mind. Thus, for example, in taking from Boccaccio's 'Filostrato' the tale of 'Troilus and Cressida,'—the story of 'Troilus and Briseis' (whence Briseida, Griseida, Cressida), first added by Benoit de St. Maure to the 'Geste de Troie,'—Chaucer shows himself all Englishman in variations from the tale as the Italian told it. Effeminacy is wiped out of the character of Troilus; he does not faint in the senate. The impression of unbridled passion in the love of Cressida is weakened; there is substituted for it prudent maidenly desire to have a protector in the camp. Pandarus, too, appears not as a noble comrade; but with the mark of scorn, that Shakespeare deepened, set upon his forehead. At home, then, is the fixed character of the nation, which has no distinct periods. But there are changes, only the more apparent because superficial, in the manner of expression; and, if we would understand these, we must look abroad. The true anatomist, tracing a nerve, leaves now and then the narrow line itself untouched, while he explores its neighbourhood. For he accounts himself to be without real understanding of its course until he has studied it in its relation to surrounding parts. It is so that the true student of literature must learn to dissect as he goes, and work out his knowledge with a firm avoidance of the swift assumption that breeds only delusive formulas. It is only, therefore, that we may follow with safer knowledge some of the next chapters in the story of the English mind that we turn for a little while

from our immediate subject to clear the way for future tracing of the relations between English writers and the great period of the revival of letters in Europe.

The Italian Revival at the Court of Sicily. Barbarossa's son, Henry VI., having claimed, by right of his wife Constance, King Roger's daughter, and after Tancred's death taken by force, the kingdom of Sicily, kept bloody Christmas at Palermo. Three years afterwards, in 1197, he died and left his three-year old son, Frederick, heir to that kingdom.¹ Henry VI. had been a troubadour, and his son's birth had been welcomed with all palatable prophecy by Master Peter, the verse-maker of Eboli. Pope Innocent III. had fatherly charge of the young orphan king, and received from him during his troubled youth three oaths of allegiance before, having excommunicated his old ally the unmanageable Guelf Emperor Otho of Brunswick, his Holiness resolved on the election of his ward Frederick—the Boy from Sicily, as he was called in the North—to the Roman Empire. It was Innocent, too, who contrived Frederick's marriage with Constance of Aragon, and thus brought to the Sicilian Court stray murmurs of Castilian music. In the year of the grant of Magna Charta in aid of the liberties of England, the year also of the great Lateran Council in aid of the power of the clergy, A.D. 1215, Frederick was crowned. Within three more years Otho was dead, and Frederick was holding the infant Rudolf of Hapsburg at the baptismal font. Frederick, who left Sicily, aged seventeen, a lad of the Pope's fashioning, returned, aged six-and-twenty, an able, crafty man, with the Roman Empire joined to his Sicilian kingdom, and England and France bidding for his friendship. For the next eight years his court was in his Italian kingdom, where he had lay rebels to tame and a grasping clergy to contend with. The clergy he fought with their own weapon of duplicity, though never showing such mastery in the art as that of his old guardian Innocent III., who justified villainous treachery against the Albigenses by the text, "Being crafty, I caught you with guile."

In 1227 Gregory IX. became Pope—a Pope of sterner stuff than the Honorius who had been Innocent's successor. "God,"

¹ See the section in Bk. I. ch. xvi., 'Seed-time of Italian Literature.'

Saracens his favourite instructors. He took measures to keep up the knowledge of Arabic in his dominions, and in the medical schools at Salerno caused Arabs, Hebrews, Greeks, and Latins, to be taught each in their own language. At his court were the two sons of Averroes, most learned of the Spanish Mahometans, who cared so little for Mahometanism that, in reference to its prohibition of pork-eating, they called it a form of religion that could approve itself to no understanding except that of a hog. Of the University of Naples Frederick was the founder. He worked himself at the details of the castles that he built—with his own hand planned the towns that he founded. He delighted in sculpture and architecture (especially Saracenic), and in painting, though it was only the close of his reign that was marked by the birth of Cimabue, father of Italian art.

Among his learned correspondents was our English Grosseteste Bishop of Lincoln; and it was at the request of Frederick, to whom he had dedicated his translation of Avicenna's work upon Animals, that Michael Scot composed his treatise upon Physiognomy. Odd legends were current about the literature and philosophy of Frederick's Apulian Court. It was said that he once took Michael Scot into a room with a moveable ceiling, and inquired of him how far it was from the ceiling to the sky. Michael calculated and replied. Then Frederick had the ceiling lowered to an almost imperceptible degree, took Michael into the room again, asking him to verify his calculation and say whether the previous reckoning was right. Michael calculated, hesitated, and said that he was right before, but now either the sky had been raised or the earth lowered.

Less fabulous tales were told of the Emperor's cruelty in punishing his enemies with torture. He was treacherous, too, by help of agents taken usually from the lower ranks, Christian or Saracen, creatures whom he disgraced and stripped when they were no longer useful to him. For "I have never," he said, "bred a hog without having its lard." There was Oriental pomp in his treasures of wild beasts—elephants, lions, tigers—camels to bear his treasure, and rare birds, his cheetahs on horseback, his hounds and his innumerable hawks, his golden throne adorned with pearls and precious stones, his black slaves playing upon silver trumpets, his wonderful tent, the gift of the Sultan,

gracefully yielded the Holy City by the Treaty of 1229, with Bethlehem, Nazareth, and Sidon, saying to Islam, "After all, we are only giving up churches and ruins." Frederick took possession of Jerusalem as with the shrug of a philosopher and man of the world, who had a high respect for the learning and civilisation of the Arabs. Sultan Kamel gave it up as with a sympathetic answering shrug; and Frederick went in person to the famous city where no Roman Emperor had been since it was lost by Heraclius six hundred years before. An Imaum of the Mosque of Omar, who went with him, says, "The Emperor was red and bald; he had weak eyes: had he been a slave he would not have fetched 200 drachms. . . . He asked why bars had been placed on the windows of the Holy Chapel? 'To keep out the birds,' was the answer. 'You may keep out the birds,' said Frederick; 'but God is sending you hogs in their place.' Thus scornfully did he refer to his fellow Christians,"—or rather to the train of the Pope, who at that time was pouring an army of marauders into his Italian kingdom. In June, 1229, Frederick landed again in Italy, and his first act was to ask peace of the Pope. His Holiness replied with anathemas. Frederick collected his force and sent another embassy in vain. Then in a few days, his subjects rallying to his standard, he forced back the clerical host into the Campagna. Thereafter peace was made, saving the honour of the Church, which, so Gregory wrote to the Emperor, was "rejoicing over her recovered son, like Anna over Tobias."

Frederick grudged no ceremony of conciliation; but he held to his own humours, and maintained, whether friend or enemy, under austere eyes of the priest, in the brilliant court of the most powerful sovereign of the day, its harem guarded by black eunuchs, its gay troubadours, its favour to all the learned, whether Christians, Saracens, or Jews. In Palermo only upon state occasions, he held court usually on the eastern coast of Apulia, which was studded with his castles and hunting-lodges. As for the Saracens, he had a favoured colony of them at Nocera, to which he looked for defenders, if the fidelity of his own subjects wavered; and he was long after referred to with especial kindness by Arab chroniclers as one whose inclinations carried him to Islam, and who had in youth received from among the

Saracens his favourite instructors. He took measures to keep up the knowledge of Arabic in his dominions, and in the medical schools at Salerno caused Arabs, Hebrews, Greeks, and Latins, to be taught each in their own language. At his court were the two sons of Averroes, most learned of the Spanish Mahometans, who cared so little for Mahometanism that, in reference to its prohibition of pork-eating, they called it a form of religion that could approve itself to no understanding except that of a hog. Of the University of Naples Frederick was the founder. He worked himself at the details of the castles that he built—with his own hand planned the towns that he founded. He delighted in sculpture and architecture (especially Saracenic), and in painting, though it was only the close of his reign that was marked by the birth of Cimabue, father of Italian art.

Among his learned correspondents was our English Grosseteste Bishop of Lincoln; and it was at the request of Frederick, to whom he had dedicated his translation of Avicenna's work upon Animals, that Michael Scot composed his treatise upon Physiognomy. Odd legends were current about the literature and philosophy of Frederick's Apulian Court. It was said that he once took Michael Scot into a room with a moveable ceiling, and inquired of him how far it was from the ceiling to the sky. Michael calculated and replied. Then Frederick had the ceiling lowered to an almost imperceptible degree, took Michael into the room again, asking him to verify his calculation and say whether the previous reckoning was right. Michael calculated, hesitated, and said that he was right before, but now either the sky had been raised or the earth lowered.

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showing the movements of the sun and the moon, and telling the hours of day and night. Half barbarian, too, was his practical disregard of the rights and honours of the sex whose conventional praises he sang as a troubadour.

The youngest of his illegitimate children—legitimatised by a marriage with his Piedmontese mother when upon her deathbed—was Manfredi, his noble successor in South Italy.

Such was the Frederick at whose Sicilian Court, where Jew and Arab, Greek and Latin, blended wit, the modern literature of Italy began its rapid growth. "I have seen him," said the Minorite Salimbene, "and at one time I loved him; in truth, there would have been few rulers in the world like him, had he loved God, the Church, and his own soul." Dante, born fourteen years after the death of Frederick, assigned his true place in the history of European literature when in his treatise on the Common Speech he said, "The illustrious heroes, Frederick Cæsar and his noble son Manfredi, followed after elegance and scorned what was mean; so that all the best compositions of the time came out of their court. Thus, because their royal throne was in Sicily, all the poems of our predecessors in the vulgar tongue were called Sicilian."

The Emperor himself, besides writing part of a Latin treatise on the Art of Hawking, which his son Manfredi continued, was a famous troubadour, and greater still was, as a troubadour, Manfredi. Those were the days also of Sordello, and of Peter de Vineia, Frederick II.'s chancellor, who wrote the first extant Italian sonnet, and who proved faithless when fortune was adverse to the patron and brother poet who had raised him from beggary.

With the same Frederick arose the Italian form of the old German struggle between Ghibelline (to the Germans Waiblingen, a battle-cry drawn from a castle of the Suabian chief) and Guelf. When, in the summer of 1236, Frederick placed himself at the head of the Ghibelline party, it was against Northern Italy that he prepared war—against that part of Italy in which not only the Lombard league, but also the very rivalries and dissensions among and within its free cities, testified to the spirit of freedom that set noblest minds at work. The Emperor, in his half-barbaric Apulian court, patronised art and

literature as their feudal chief; his Latin prose discussed the sport of kings and nobles, while his poetry, and that of his brother troubadours, was cultivated as a courtly pastime; not as the pouring out of a man's heart, blood of his blood, soul of his soul. In the north the true source of a nation's literature was unlocked, where men combated proudly for their rights with souls astir. And when, at last, their passion spoke forth in song that caught a grace from the Sicilian music, the change in the source of inspiration was the change from a De Vinea to a Dante.

Barbarossa had struggled in vain to force back the leagued Italian free cities under feudal government. But there was contest still in each town between the industrial class and the nobles, the nobles being again divided into those who claimed to be an oligarchy and those who resisted their pretensions. The Italian feudal party, long without a directing head, at last looked to Frederick II. as their chief. Ezzelin da Romano, that monster of almost incredible cruelty, whose tyrannies after the death of Frederick caused a crusade to be preached against him, sought the Emperor at Augsburg and courted invasion. Ezzelin declared the gates of Verona, where he himself ruled, to be open to the Emperor; and there, in fact, when the attack began, Frederick was entertained in triumph, by the Montecchi, those enemies to the Capulets, known to us as the Montagues. The popular party, or the Guelfs, were then without a leader, but the policy of Rome befriended them. A cruel strife ensued; a strife on the part of Frederick against the spirit of liberty, as the antagonist of kingcraft. "Kings ought to help one another," he wrote to the King of Hungary. Even in religion, though the Church called him an Epicurean, and he had no rooted faith in any creed, while self-interest and inclination forced him into sharp attack upon misdoings of the Papal hierarchy and the corruptions of the priesthood, he warred also against liberty of thought by severe persecution of the heretics. And so Frederick warred also against the free cities of North Italy; cruelly sacked Vicenza; was victorious at Corte Nuova; besieged Brescia, and bound prisoners from the town to the machines that he advanced against the Brescians. But the prisoners bade their

The Italian
Revival: in
the Lombard
cities.

towns-fellows strike fearlessly, and count no man's safety of more worth than their country's honour. That was the temper which put strength into the new outburst of Italian song. Ardizzone Losco saw his own son bound to one of the besieger's castles, as he continued, without flinching, to lead the attack on it with arrows and torches.

Against that spirit the imperial force was spent in vain. After a siege of more than two months, Frederick, in October, 1239, retired from before Brescia. The Pope desired peace in Lombardy, and a diversion of all European war towards crusade against the Moslem. During his victorious career before the siege of Brescia, the Emperor was deaf to all the exhortations of the Pope. The Brescians showed the world that Frederick was not invincible. Their success gave not only new life to the cause of civil liberty in Italy, but new courage also to the Emperor's great rival at Rome, and to the whole Guelf party, to which the Pope and the free cities of the Lombard league allied themselves. On the following Palm Sunday Pope Gregory excommunicated the great Emperor, and consigned his soul to the devil—a sentence published throughout Northern Italy with ringing of bells and quenching of candles. Venice swore league with Rome for a combined attack on Sicily. Genoa took the side of the Church. The nobles of North-eastern Italy were nearly all openly Guelf. Frederick then appealed to Europe, and struck the harder at abuses of the Church, threatening to bring “fat bulls from the ends of the earth, and reform the Church by plucking out the horns of the proud.” Gregory retaliated with a circular against “the head, the middle, and the lower parts of this Beast Frederick, called the Emperor,” and the hosts of the friars scattered the Pope's mind about Frederick among a people hostile to his despotism.

And now the contest between German feudalism and the
Guelfs and Ghibellines. municipal spirit of North Italy was passing from among a cloud of local names for the two leading factions, to that general struggle in which the names of Guelf and Ghibelline, given to the two sides in Florence, spread through Tuscany, and, after Frederick's death, came to be used over all North Italy. Rome fought, not so much with the upholders of freedom, as against Frederick. It was then her worldly

interest to fight in the ranks of the free, but her greed surpassed her need even at this time, when in England Robert Grosseteste, Bishop of Lincoln, resisted the shameless thrusting of Italian priests into the livings of the English Church. All right was not with the Guelfs, nor all wrong with the Ghibellines. Among the Ghibellines also were true patriots, men weary of dissension, who saw in the triumph of a despotic Emperor the reign of order.

Pent up in Rome, with the Emperor's soldiers near its gates, Pope Gregory died in the year 1241. Four years later another Pope, Innocent IV., assumed the right, not only of excommunicating, but also of unthroning Frederick. "The electors of the empire are free to choose a successor in his room. As to the kingdom of Sicily, we will make such provision for it as may seem expedient to us." After five more years of strong battling, Frederick still was Emperor; but he died then of bodily disease, in which he had been tended carefully by his son Manfredi, a handsome youth of eighteen, with his father's taste for arts and letters.

After Frederick's death, Manfredi suppressed the revolt excited by his Holiness the Pope in the Italian kingdom of Frederick's legitimate son and successor, the chivalrous Conrad. Conrad died two years later; and though in life he had been jealous of his half-brother's superior genius, he fearlessly bequeathed to Manfredi's care his young son and successor, Conradin. The Pope and the Guelfs then led armed revolt against the Italian rule of the House of Suabia. Manfredi protested and submitted; but when the Pope dealt with him treacherously, Manfredi took arms again and reconquered the Two Sicilies, which he held as Regent for his nephew Conradin.

Then rumour was spread of the death of Conradin in Germany; and in 1258 Manfredi was crowned at Palermo. To messengers who afterwards came from his still living nephew, Manfredi replied that he could not undo what was done, but that he should hold his crown as a trust, and bequeath it to Conradin, with added dignity. Then founding, as King of Sicily, a town, Manfredonia, he there revived the luxuries and courtly literary glories of his father's reign.

Like his father, too, Manfredi defied excommunication. But

when Urban IV., who had become Pope in 1261, offered the crown of Sicily, refused by St. Louis himself, to a brother of St. Louis, Charles Duke of Anjou and Provence, war against Manfredi was preached by his Holiness as a crusade; and on the plain of Grandella, near the walls of Benevento, in the year 1266, Manfredi died, vanquished in battle. As one who died outside the pale of Holy Church, his corpse was buried in unconsecrated ground, beside the bridge of Benevento, where every soldier of the army cast a stone upon the grave, and so a cairn was raised. But that unconsecrated burial-place being within the territories of the Church, the Bishop of Cosenza caused the body to be dug up, carried by night on the back of a mule to the nearest place beyond the Church frontier, and there, on the borders of the Campagna, cast on the banks of the river Verde. Of which outrage the soul of Manfredi, in purgatory, thus spoke through Dante's verse:

“ ‘ Yet hath God's bounty such a large embrace
 As takes up all which turneth home thereto.’
 If yon Cosenza pastor, who in chase
 Of me was urged by Clement, if but he
 Had read well in the book of God this place,
 The bones of my poor body still should be
 Near Benevento, off the bridge's head,
 And still my heavy cairn would shelter me.
 They now by rains are beat, by winds are sped,
 Beyond the kingdom, Verde's banks between,
 To which he carried them by lanterns dead.
 Their curses not so surely kill, I ween,
 But toward us may eternal love descend,
 So long as hope shall have a glimpse of green.”¹

Conradin then, entering Italy with a large army, was defeated and taken prisoner at the battle of Tagliacozzo; and was executed at Naples on the same scaffold with his friend the Duke of Austria, whose fallen head the youth took up and kissed repeatedly before laying his own upon the block.

Charles of Anjou, son of Louis VIII. of France, and Count of Provence by marriage with a daughter of its last Count Raymond, of whose three other daughters two married the Kings of France and England, had been in Egypt

¹ ‘Purgatory,’ canto iii., Cayley's translation.

with the crusade of 1250, attempted by his brother Saint Louis, whose imprisonment he shared. Charles of Anjou's despotic temper was making enemies, even of his peaceful subjects in Provence, when in 1264—the year before the birth of Dante—Pope Urban IV. offered him the crown of Naples. In him the chivalrous and accomplished Manfredi had a successor, dull, cruel, and grasping. In a few weeks Charles saw, with resentment, men's hearts turned from himself to Conradin; and the stupid tyrant, when that youth had been sent to the scaffold, took bloody revenge upon those Italians who had wished him well. Twenty-four barons of Calabria were executed in one day. Charles of Anjou sought power also in North Italy, and would coerce to his will even the Papal See. He had a devoted servant in his countryman, Pope Martin IV., when his oppressed subjects wreaked their terrible revenge at the Sicilian Vespers.

The first grandeur of the modern literature of Europe was based on a condition of society that can be understood only by help of such historical detail. While in the persons, either of Frederick II. or Manfredi, the House of Suabia, ruling in South Italy, headed and gave its name to the Ghibelline faction, its Northern friends argued, from what they saw, for the advantages of an imperial rule. In that, they hoped, all minor contests over the partition of authority, by which the Northern towns were agitated, would be swallowed up; and a liberal chief who loved art and literature, and who was strong to fight the usurping tyrannies of priestcraft, would give life and law to society. That was a theory for which, in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, very much could be said. On the other side were the Guelfs, who saw in the proposed head of society a foreign master, who declared strongly for the citizen's individual right of self-government, and who watched so jealously over municipal privileges, and each city's, each family's right to equality with its neighbour, that feuds between city and city, family and family—to which the Ghibellines pointed as justification of their different political view—arose out of the very energies that gave to Italy a Dante for her son. Thus we see that the old Italian Guelfs and Ghibellines were like our modern English Whigs and Tories, not factions, one all wise and one all worthless, but, in equal degree, honest advocates of political

systems, to which were gathered, on the one side, those who, whether by force of education or natural bent of mind, laid chief stress on the quieting influence of settled authority; and, on the other side, those who laid chief stress on the rights of individuals, in a political system of which both took the same general view, and both equally desired the welfare. On each side, of course, there would be blind advocates and adventurers who sought only their own private gain; but here, as elsewhere in history, the great conflicts of opinion that divide a people, maintained between currents established by the diverse constitution of men's minds, are as much a part of the Divine ordinance for the well-being of man's spiritual life, as, for the well-being of his natural life, are the winds, which, by their opposition, yield the rains that make earth fruitful.

Some of the soundest fruit man's mind ever has yielded is that which has been watered in the flood-storms caused by the antagonism between man's warmer nature, and the chilling policy of Rome. To make the Pope the direct representative of heavenly power was to establish and justify at his court a necessary system of self-seeking. Whatever of the world's dignities and possessions could be won for the Church and its head, was won to the side of God, as bait for souls, and bait lost to the devil. The theory of Papal policy was clear, and, to a certain class of minds, indisputable; to most indeed of the best minds in Christendom indisputable, as long as a true zeal for holy things hallowed the grasping of the Church at secular possessions. But when that sacred zeal grew faint, and through the attained bait—devil's bait, though in the Church's mouth—the hook passed into the Pontifical palate, there was a new worldly gloss to the old spiritual doctrine. A Pope like Celestine, who cared only for heavenly things, was no true head of the Church, and he must fall before a Boniface. The avowed principle was the same, but, practically, the policy of Rome was an ungenerous one, that subordinated every social interest to the worldly aggrandisement of a Church whose arrogant chiefs lagged far behind the noblest aspirations of their time.

When the See of Rome saw a rival power at Naples and Palermo in the House of Suabia, and fought against it, the Popes allied themselves to the Guelfs of the Lombard towns,

and seemed to be the friends of Italian nationality, of municipal liberties, and of the independent rights of citizenship. That this was to them only a short-lived accident of their position appeared when they asked Charles of Anjou to fight their battle, and, so far as the interest of Rome was concerned, allied the name and cause of the Guelfs to the lowest form of foreign tyranny.

Dante was born in the year (1265) when Charles of Anjou was crowned at Rome by Clement IV. The death of Manfredi, and the execution of young Conradin, were In the days of Dante. events that happened during the first two years of Dante's life, and he was seventeen years old at the date of the Sicilian Vespers. Five years before Dante's birth the Florentine Guelfs had suffered disastrous defeat in battle with the Ghibellines of Sienna and Pisa, to whom Manfredi had sent horsemen, each city fighting with its allies by the hill of Monte Aperto, about five miles from Sienna. Ghibellines who before had fled from Florence, including seventeen of the principal families of the town, then returned, and the chief families of the Guelfs, the lawyer Alighieri, Dante's father, among the number, in their turn departed into exile. But when Charles of Anjou came as the Pope's ally and Manfredi's enemy, the banished Guelfs of Florence, now taking a red lily for badge, were the first to join his standard, and they earned Manfredi's eulogy during the battle by their valour shown in conflict against him at Grandella. The Guelfs returned to Florence and made transient peace with the Ghibellines. As for the long habitual state of armed rivalry between noble and noble, it had led to the keeping of serragli or moveable barricades, that were set up when a street quarrel had bred tumult in the street occupied by nobles of a particular faction. These barricades were besieged and defended until nightfall, after which each side gathered its dead, and next day peacefully apportioned honours of the fight. And still, through all the violence of faction, the independent energies of her people, claiming part in the predominance of the Guelfs, kept pace with the commercial growth of Florence. The year of the Sicilian Vespers was the year of the Constitution that expressed the political mind of this The birth-place of Modern Literature. Athens of the Middle Ages. By the Constitution of 1282,

established when the poet Dante was among the youth of Florence, supreme power was given to the Priores, first three in number, afterwards six. The Priors held office only for two months, and elected their successors from among the rich and noble of the city. There was retained also the year-long magistracy of the Podesta, and that of the Captain of the People. But none of these magistrates could enact laws without the assent of the Parliament or Chief Council, while, even before a law reached this assembly, there was the Council of the Priors, to which the suggestions of the Priors had to be submitted; there were also two Councils to assist the Captain of the People and deliberate on his suggestions; and there were two Councils to assist the Podesta. All these bodies debated in accordance with fixed Parliamentary forms, which forbade interruption of a speaker, limited the duration of debate, and so forth. When a law proposed by the Priors or by the Captain of the People had passed the Council of the Priors or that of the Captain, it was required that it should pass also through the Councils of the Podesta before it was submitted to the General Parliament, formed by the union of all the lesser councils, with the Podesta for a President. Such was the spirit of liberty that lay at the roots, and has ever made the sap of modern literature. The army provided by this free Constitution was a militia of all men between the ages of fifteen and seventy, organised into bodies of fifty, under twenty-four captains of war; and a system of service by proxy was established by division of the army into a stationary corps for defence of the city, and a marching combatant corps, which was maintained in time of war at the expense of those who stayed at home. The Captain-General, or Commander-in-Chief, obtained his office, like the Podesta, by election, and was sometimes one of the civil magistrates, sometimes, for reasons of domestic policy, a brave or noble stranger, who had a few troops of his own to bring with him into the service of the city. The thriving traders of Florence were resolved not to leave room for the growth of a military tyrant from among themselves. How the commercial town thrived while thus guarding so jealously its liberties is shown by the fact that within thirty years before the birth of Dante the streets had been paved with stone instead of brick, an invention of the famous architect

Arnolfo di Lapo; the Palace of Justice, the prisons, and the Bridge of the Trinity had been built. Greek painters had also been brought to Florence, whom young Cimabue saw at work in the chapel, and whose art was transcended by the genius of that Florentine. In the year of Dante's birth Cimabue, first of the great line of Italian painters, was twenty-five years old. Cimabue died when Dante's age was thirty-seven; and while the poet attained mastery in song, the painter broke free from the traditional formalities of his Greek teachers, painted visions of the Virgin among angels, and of apostles, and of saints, with life in the limbs and flow in the draperies. His great picture of the Virgin, for the church of Santa Maria Novella, was carried in Dante's time, with sound of trumpet and rejoicing of the people, from the painter's house to its place in the church. In that house, after Cimabue's death, his art survived him; for there lived his pupil Giotto. Giotto was but eleven years younger than his friend Dante. From the hand of Giotto was the portrait of Dante, at the age of thirty, which was discovered in the Bargello of Florence five-and-twenty years ago.

“Lo, Cimabue thought alone to tread
The lists of painting; now doth Giotto gain
The praise, and darkness on his glory shed”—

wrote Dante in the 11th canto of his ‘Purgatory,’ and added, of himself, with a strong sense of power, referring to his friend Guido Cavalcanti as a poet who had surpassed Guido Guinicelli—

“Thus hath one Guido from another ta'en
The praise of speech, and haply one hath pass'd
Through birth, who from their nest will chase the twain.”

The Palazzo Vecchio was built when Dante was twenty-four years old. Five years later the builders were at work on the Baptistery and Cathedral; and Dante was but in his thirty-fifth year when there were cast for the Baptistery those brazen gates which Michael Angelo declared “worthy to be the gates of heaven.” Then also to these works the building of the city walls was added; and for the towers and barricades of factious chiefs within the town, which were ordered to be reduced or abolished, there were set up fortress-walls for the shelter of a working commonwealth. Outside the walls an active race of

husbandmen, fearless possessors of the goods they earned, tilled the ground, formed canals, and raised embankments against floods, with capital borrowed from the townspeople, who shared the harvests and paid all the land-tax.

It was in the year 1265, when Roger Bacon taught in Eng-
Dante in
Florence. land, being then fifty years old, and when, Layamon's 'Brut' having been written sixty years before, we had no better poet among us than Robert of Gloucester, that Alighieri, the jurisconsult, became, by his second wife, Donna Bella, father of that son Durante (enduring) whose name lives in its shortened form of Dante to the end of time. Although the child was born in Florence, his father, as it has been said, was among the Guelfs who had gone out after the battle of Monte Aperto. Very soon after his birth the Guelf party was again in power, but the lawyer returned to die, and the young Dante was left to the care of an affluent mother, who caused him to be liberally trained. An early friend was the daring and high-spirited poet Guido Cavalcanti, who was of a good old Florentine family, and by about fifteen years older than Dante. Dear friend of Dante's also was Casella the musician, whom he found among the spirits that sang of Israel's deliverance, as they came towards him in the angelic pinnacle. An early teacher of Dante was Brunetto Latini, a noble Florentine Guelf, who wrote in Norman French a metrical abridgment of the learning of his time, called the 'Tresor,' and in Italian verse a 'Tesoretto' of philosophy, after the plan of a dream, then fashionable in courtly poetry. Brunetto dreamt that he had lost his way in a forest, where he met with Nature, by whom he was instructed concerning God and man, the five senses, the elements, the planets, the variety of animals, and navigation beyond Spain. Nature then bade him search the forest for Philosophy, the Four Virtues, the God of Love, Fortune and Fraud. He took some lessons of the Virtues, and at the abode of Love he met with Ovid, who became his guide. Brunetto then went to confession, received absolution, said that he would not visit Fortune, returned to the forest, saw the world and the four elements, and questioned Ptolemy. It may have been especially through this poem that a common fashion in the courtly poetry of his day determined the form also of the 'Divine Comedy' as an allegorical

vision, and caused Dante to represent himself as taking Virgil for his guide.

Lombardy was without a written language, and the choice of language for the poets of North Italy was between Provençal and Sicilian. Dante adopted the Sicilian, The Father of Modern Literature. or, as he called it, the court language; but Ugo Catola sang liberty, and Sordello had earned as a Mantuan, in Dante's 'Purgatory,' the embrace of Virgil, by songs in the Provençal. Dante wrote in his early manhood the 'Vita Nuova'—the New or the Early Life—connecting, with a narrative of aspiration towards Beatrice, as the occasion of them, sonnets and canzone, representing, artificially, according to the manner of that time, various moods of love. Fifty yards from the house in which Dante lived was the house of Folco Portinari, father of the little Beatrice or Bice, on whom Dante founded, not a set of personal love sonnets, but his ideal of a dawn of life and love, distinguished by the chastest purity. He was in the mystical ninth year when he met her, a child of eight in a crimson dress. From that time Love held sovereign empire over his soul. After the exact measure of another mystical nine years he saw her, arrayed in the purest white, between two noble ladies older than herself. She saluted him; "and the hour," he says, "at which her sweet salutation reached me was exactly the ninth hour of the day." Then follows the mystical vision expressed in the first sonnet. The narrative describes phases of a love so pure that the highest happiness it seeks is the gracious salutation of its object. But there is always the design of connecting together sonnets describing different shades of feeling, until the grief for his loss of Beatrice in that year of the calendar "in which the perfect number was nine nines completed within the century in which she was born into the world," she being herself "a Nine, in other words a miracle whose only root is the adorable Trinity." After the grief follows the faithful recollection that withstands temptation of new beauty, strengthened by a vision of Beatrice as first seen in the crimson robe of her innocent child-beauty. When the actual Beatrice died, in the year 1290, she was the young wife of Simon dei Bardi; but this fact nearly concerned neither Dante nor the

poem. Her place in the 'Vita Nuova' is that of a sublimely pure ideal, which runs through the whole inner life of the first mighty poet of the moderns. At the very outset of this work he describes his ideal as "the glorious lady of my mind;" and says, "she was called Beatrice by many who knew not how she was called." Had the lady to whom Dante's unstaining homage was in its material sense dedicated, like the lady of the verse of Dante da Maiano, borne the name of Nina, she could not by that, or any other merely individual name, have appeared in the verse of Dante Alighieri. The glorious lady of this Dante's mind was the pure spirit of Love, Beatrice, the Blesser; earthly love in the 'Vita Nuova,' heavenly love in the 'Divine Comedy.' On earth, "when she drew near unto any, so much truth and simpleness entered into his heart, that he dared neither to lift his eyes nor to return her salutation. She went along crowned and clothed with humility, showing no whit of pride in all that she heard and saw; and when she had gone by it was said of many, 'This is not a woman, but one of the beautiful angels of heaven;' and there were some that said, 'This is surely a miracle; blessed be the Lord, who hath power to work thus marvellously.'"¹ There is the most careful exclusion of all fleshly longing from Dante's picture of the Spirit of Love, that walks abroad on the same earth with us, while yet, to our hearts, the world is young. When by the spiritual eye she is seen no more in the street, but is removed to heaven, Dante's small treason to her memory is checked by a dream of her, not, be it observed, as the lost object of a fleshly love, but as the nine-year-old child in the crimson dress, who represented the warm glow of love in the heart blessed with a childlike innocence. Dante's last prayer in the 'Vita Nuova' is that, when his work is done, his spirit "may go hence to behold the glory of its lady; to wit, of that blessed Beatrice who now gazeth continually on His countenance who is blessed through all ages. Glory to God!" The spiritual Beatrice in Dante's early song was a nymph dwelling on the same heights of the Christian Parnassus that were trod also by our Milton, when, at a like age, he trans-

¹ 'Vita Nuova,' Rossetti's translation.

formed a child of thirteen, the Lady Alice Egerton, into that lovely ideal of Purity, the Lady in Comus, and founded on a trivial incident in the family for which that masque was written, a pure allegory of man's duty in the using of the gifts of God. Each poet too, as he trod upward, sought in his chief song to justify the ways of God to man. Dante's unfinished 'Convito,' consisting of three canzoni with a commentary, continues the allegory of the 'Vita Nuova,' by showing how the poet, or the soul of man, after the actual vision of love in youth and early manhood has departed, turns to a new love, and seeks consolation in philosophy. And so the spiritual sense of these works proceeds by definite steps upward to the higher mysteries of the 'Divina Commedia.' Here, after the early days of faith and love, and when, after the first passage from emotions of youth to the intellectual enjoyments of maturer years, enthusiasm also for philosophy has passed away, Dante, or the Soul of Man represented in his person, passes through worldly life (the wood of the first canto of the 'Divine Comedy') into sin, and, through God's grace, to a vision of his misery—to the 'Hell.' But by repentance and penance—'Purgatory'—the marks of the seven deadly sins are effaced from his forehead, and the bright vision of Beatrice, Heavenly Love, whose handmaids are the seven virtues, admonishes him as he attains to 'Paradise.' There Beatrice, the Beatifier, Love that brings the Blessing, is his guide to the end of the soul's course, the glory of the very presence of the Godhead, where a Love that is Almighty rules the Universe.

It was a part of his true gift of genius that Dante spoke with his whole soul all that was most real to it, and thus struggled Godward in his verse. This was the source of his enduring majesty and power. In his earliest verse there is no puny whimpering of boy-love; in his crowning work he shows how a soul in earnest may reach to the light and love of God through even the gloomiest theology. He is so much in earnest, that every step he treads is among the naked souls of his own countrymen. The fate of kings, the avarice of popes, the vices and the passions of known men; hopes, aspirations, destinies of living and dead, lie as the very stones upon the road the poet travels. Of a pope whom he finds in Hell, heels uppermost,

Dante asks the question common among men who then and in later years spoke the best mind of Europe :—

“ Pray tell me now what price our Master bade
 St. Peter yield him, ere he gave the keys
 Into his keeping ; nay, but sure he said,
 ‘ Follow thou me,’ and asked none other fees.

 You shepherds did the Evangelist perceive,
 When she, that on the waters keepeth state,
 Appeared in whoredom to the kings to cleave,
 She that had sevenfold heads congenerate,
 And the ten horns in her approval told,
 So long as virtue satisfied her mate.
 Ye’ve made you gods of silver and of gold,
 And from the idolators how differ ye ?
 By serving more than they a hundredfold.
 O Constantine ! what evil do we see,
 Not from thy faith, but from that dowry sprung,
 Which the first wealthy pontiff had from thee ! ”¹

There was the obvious sense and there were secondary forms of allegory which might be fitted to the whole of Dante’s work, or to detached parts of it. He himself, in a letter to his patron Can Grande, written upon the completion of the ‘Purgatory,’ said that the end of the whole and of that part was to remove the living in this life from the state of misery, and lead them through to the state of happiness. The whole subject, he said, taken simply, is the state of souls after death. If taken allegorically, the subject is man deserving well and ill through free will, subject to a rewarding and punishing justice. The sense of that work is not simple, but manifold. For the first sense, he says, is literal, the second allegorical and moral, distinguished into the allegorical, the moral, and the anagogic. And of its name, given before the modern drama had existence, as ‘The Comedy of Dante Alighieri’ (Divine was a later definition), he explains that it is because comedy, derived from *κώμη*, a village, and *ὠδή*, a song, as it were a rustic song, differs from tragedy in its matter. Tragedy, as witness Seneca, begins nobly and quietly, and leads to a fetid and horrid end, being for this fetidness named after *τράγος*, a goat. Comedy, as witness Terence, begins roughly, but ends happily. And so his poem, which begins in

¹ ‘Inferno,’ canto xix., Cayley’s translation, which I use throughout.

hell, ends with the happiness of heaven. Again, its language is that common speech wherein women chatter together, and this familiar speech learnt from the nurse, as distinguished from the Latin taught by discipline of grammar, was called in the literature of that day comedy, the word in its Greek derivation actually meaning a work to be sung to the people of the country. A like use of the word "comic" Dante makes when in his first eclogue to J. Virgilius, alluding to his use of the vernacular speech instead of Latin, he asks, "*Comica nonne vides ipsum reprehendere verba?*"

It was of the very essence of the genius of Dante that he should join earth to heaven in his native tongue. In his unfinished treatise, *De Vulgari Eloquio*, on the Common Speech, he gave to no one Italian dialect a right of domination, but claimed for the Italian of literature a common tongue from which the provincialisms of each district had been discarded. To his country he paid every kind of honest service. In the year before the death of Beatrice young Dante fought with the Guelfs against the Ghibellines of Arezzo in the battle of Campaldino, which was a victory for the Florentines. Two years after the death of Beatrice Dante married Gemma de' Donati, a lady of a powerful house of the Guelfs in Florence, and became the father of five or six boys, two of whom survived to illustrate his genius, and a girl called Beatrice, who became a nun. In the year 1300, the year in which Dante, then thirty-five years old, places the action of his '*Divine Comedy*,' the poet, who had been fourteen times intrusted with missions in the service of the Republic, was elected one of the priors, or chief magistrate of Florence. But in that same year the Florentine Guelfs had split into two parties, the "*Bianchi*" and "*Neri*"—Whites and Blacks—results of a private feud at Pistoia, in which the parties had engaged the chief rival houses of the Florentine Guelfs as their patrons. Dante as a magistrate banished chiefs of both factions, but was said—though a dear friend of his own was among the number of their exiles—to have shown excess of favour to the Whites. The Blacks engaged the goodwill of the Pope, who sent Charles of Valois with 1200 armed men to Florence in the character of "*peacemaker*." He made peace in his own way by readmitting all the Neri, and by conniving at

proscription, robbery, and murder of the Bianchi. Then Dante, who was at Rome pleading for justice on the part of the Whites, heard that his house had been plundered and that he also had been proscribed. In January, 1302, he was sentenced to two years' exile and a fine of 8000 florins; in the March following he, with others, accused by common report of baratry, was condemned to be burnt alive. He and the exiled Bianchi then sought to reconquer their ground by union with the Ghibellines. But the rest of the poet's days, until his death in 1321, at the age of fifty-seven, were spent in wandering and banishment. The chief patronage of the grand exile was by the Scala family that ruled at Verona, especially Can Francisco, who was called Il Grande for his deeds of war against the Paduans. To him Dante's ancestor Caccaguidi, met in Paradise, refers when he predicts the poet's bitter days of exile:—

“Thou shalt experience how another's bread
Is salt upon our palate, and what bale
'Tis up and down another's stairs to tread.

Thy first asylum, and thy first fair inn,
Shall be the bounties of yon Lombard great,
Whose crest's the ladder, and God's bird therein,
Whose favours on thee shall so largely wait,
That of two things, to grant and to request,
Shall that be earliest which is elsewhere late.”¹

Dante died at Ravenna, guest of its liberal lord Guido Novella da Polenta, the father of Francesca di Rimini. When Florence desired afterwards to possess his bones, the people of Ravenna would not give them up. But about fifty years after Dante's death, in the same year (1373) in which our Chaucer visited Florence, the Florentines established a public lectureship, with a yearly salary of a hundred gold florins, for the exposition of Dante's ‘Divine Comedy,’ and Boccaccio was appointed the first lecturer. Chaucer must have heard on the spot discussions of this project. It is even possible that he—then a man of about five-and-forty—may have been among those who heard Boccaccio's first lecture upon Dante. Rome put into the Expurgatory Index Dante's philosophical Latin treatise upon Monarchy, which

¹ ‘Paradise,’ canto xvii., Cayley's translation.

answered in three books three questions, showing, 1, that monarchy was necessary to the world's wellbeing; 2, that the Roman people rightfully held empire; and, 3, that their monarch, immediately dependent upon God, wielded a temporal power independent of the Pope's spiritual authority. That third book, being a philosophical and religious essay, throughout calmly argued against worldly usurpations of the Church.

Petrarch, too, born at Arezzo in 1304, was of the Florentine republic, but of a family less noble than Dante's. His ^{Florentine} father and grandfather were notaries. His father Pietro, ^{Petrarch.} son of Parenzo, being known by the familiar diminutive Petraccha, the son Francisco was described as Franciscus Petracchi (filius), or, in the common mouth, Petrarcha. Young Petrarch's father belonged, like Dante, to the party of the Whites, and he suffered banishment at the same time as Dante, with accusation of having falsified a document, and sentenced to a fine of a thousand lire, or loss of his right hand. Petrarch afterwards told Boccaccio that his father had friendly relations with Dante, and that he remembered how in his own childhood the great poet was once pointed out to him: the solemn figure of which when it went by was whispered, "See the man who has been in hell." Petrarch was born in camp before Florence on the night of a vain attempt of the Whites and the Ghibellines to get possession of the town. Petraccha's wife, like Dante's, had leave to remain in her own country, and she went to an estate of her husband's at Ancisa with the seven months' child, who was carried by a horseman in a bundle at the end of a stick and almost drowned at the crossing of a river. It was probably at Ancisa that Francis Petrarch's younger brother was born, the pious Gerard who survived him. Petrarch's father, like Dante, a wanderer, was rejoined by his family at Pisa in 1308, but they dwelt there only for a year. In 1313 the family went with many other Italians to Avignon, where for the last four years the Papal Court had been established.

The small county of Venaissin, consisting of Avignon and the country around it, had formed part of the large possessions of Alphonso and Jeanne of Toulouse, which, on their death without heirs, were, in the reign of Philip III. of France, united to the French monarchy according to the terms of a treaty with Ray-

mond VII. But by that agreement little Venaissin, and its city of Avignon, were to be ceded to the Pope when the rest fell to France, and this part of Provence, therefore, remained subject to the see of Rome from Philip III.'s time even to the date of the Revolution of 1789. Philip IV., le Bel, after his impassioned struggle with Pope Boniface VIII. for the right to include the French clergy among his taxable subjects and for full temporal supremacy in his own kingdom, when the brief rule of that bold priest's successor had come to a sudden close, had so many partisans in the conclave that he could make whom he would Pope. So he gave the Papacy to his own Archbishop of Bordeaux as Clement V., on conditions, of which one was that, after his coronation in France, he should remove the Papal Court to the Pope's French city of Avignon. The court brought with it a cloud of followers, and so raised the price of food and lodging in the town by sudden increase to its population that Petraccha the father, who was one of the new comers, sent his wife and sons to lodge in the neighbouring village of Carpentras. In that village were other Italians, and among them a good old Tuscan schoolmaster, Convenevole of Prato, a whetstone not sharp, though a sharpener of other wits. He had profound knowledge of all he had to teach, but he throve ill; for he began and left unfinished many things, he wasted time in writing Latin poetry of little worth, he borrowed of Petrarch money and books—the money he spent, the books he mislaid, and at last, tempted by poverty, he sold. Poverty then drove him back to his own town, where at last he died, honoured as a poet by his fellow citizens, who applied to Petrarch, at Vacluse, to write his epitaph.

Without devoting himself to any special occupation in life, Petrarch studied the ancient literature of Italy with patriotic ardour. The old orators, philosophers, and poets were his countrymen of past years, living again for him in their writings, and so real to him that he amused himself by writing letters to his most familiar acquaintances among them. Constantly in after life Petrarch applied to the Italy of his own day judgments and aspirations based upon the standard supplied by the ancient world. He says that, when a child, he delighted in hearing the mere ring of the words of Cicero before he knew their meaning. Cicero and Virgil, afterwards Seneca, with

Livy and other Roman historians, were his choicest reading, and he held the writing of his own time in but light esteem. He studied law at the Universities, but said that he learnt nothing useful that he could not find in Cicero or Seneca, and that he should not practise an art in which he would not do what was dishonest, and could not do what was honest without seeming to be ignorant of his business. He went to study at Montpellier when about fourteen years old, and stayed there four years. When his father found him, to the neglect of other studies, collecting MSS. of works of the ancients, he flung them into the fire; but, seeing his distress, plucked from the flames, laughing, a Cicero and a Virgil, for his use in the rare hours of relaxation. To the last Petrarch was a diligent and successful seeker of manuscripts. He it was who discovered in a church at Verona Cicero's letters "ad Familiares;" and he once possessed, but afterwards lost, Cicero's lost work on Glory. From Montpellier he went to Bologna, where he was taught law for three years more. Then the death of his father, about the year 1326, gave Petrarch liberty to follow his own inclination.

He went back to Avignon, where, soon afterwards, his mother died, and a dishonest executor robbed the two youths, Petrarch and his brother Gerard, of their inheritance. Thus they were driven to look to the Church for a subsistence, and received strong help from the powerful Ghibelline house of Colonna, which had been plundered and persecuted by Pope Boniface VIII., after whose death their dignities and many of their estates were restored to them. The chief of the house, Stefano, was in Rome, two of his brothers were Cardinals at Avignon, one of his sons had studied with Petrarch at Bologna. The young Colonna did not then make Petrarch's acquaintance; but when he also came to Avignon, and was there made, in spite of his youth, Bishop of Lombès, Petrarch's wit and genius attracted him. Therefore, in 1330, the young bishop and the young poet set off with two other excellent youths, one skilled in poetry, the other in music, to the Bishopric of Lombès, at the foot of the Pyrenees, where Petrarch spent what he himself called the happiest summer of his life. When they came back to Avignon, the bishop introduced his friend to his uncles and brothers; and in the house of Cardinal Giovanni Colonna

Petrarch became so trusted a friend, that, one day, when, upon the merits of some matter in dispute, an oath was required from all in the household, including even a brother of the Cardinal's, and Petrarch also stood forward, his simple word was taken as sufficient.

Petrarch says that he first saw Laura on Good Friday in the year 1327, his age then being twenty-three. In 1333, to satisfy the young desire for change of scene that he says was strong in him, Petrarch undertook a journey through France, the Low Countries, and Germany; stayed some time in Paris; then went by Ghent, through Flanders and Brabant, to Lüttich, where he discovered two orations of Cicero, but hardly in the whole town yellow ink enough wherewith to copy them. At Aix-la-Chapelle it vexed him to hear men comparing Charlemagne with Pompey and Alexander. From Cologne he went over the Ardennes to Lyons, whence he took ship back to Avignon. In 1335 he received a canonry in Lombès; and about this time his friend Jacopo Colonna wrote to him of the Laura whom he had already been celebrating in sonnets, that many believed her to be a work of his imagination, and that his love was the Laurea, the laurel crown, for which he laboured.

Towards the end of 1336 Petrarch went to see his friends in Rome, where he gloried in monuments of the past, and whence he addressed a second poetical exhortation to Pope Benedict XII., who was building a Papal palace at Avignon, to return to his true capital. By a wide sea-route, that brought him near the English coast, he had returned to Avignon in August 1337, and in that year, in Vaucluse, about three miles out of town, he bought for his home a cottage with two little gardens, one by the falls of the Sorgue, the other in an island of the river. Here he had his books, and ate the fish and fruit of the valley, with a fisherman who lived in a neighbouring cottage for his only servant. In the same year a son, who lived to the age of twenty-four, much troubling him, was born to Petrarch. The son's unknown mother was probably also the mother of his daughter Francesca, who survived him. The relation to which he owed these children, at a time when he was idealizing love in the name of Laura, was to him a perfectly natural and

honest one, for he makes no reference to it in the strict account of his misdeeds that he has left behind him.

Petrarch retired to Vacluse, already a poet of wide fame, resenting the corruption of the Papal court at Avignon. At Vacluse the best part of his work in life was done. Here he wrote the greater number of his twelve Latin allegorical eclogues, of which the sixth and seventh are bitter satires against the Papal chair, and the twelfth is on the contest between English Edward III. and John of France. Here too he wrote many of his Latin metrical letters; also his two books in Latin upon Solitary Life, addressed to the only friend who was at home with him in the simplicities of life at Vacluse, the Bishop of the small neighbouring town of Cavaillon. Here he began his large enterprise of a History of Rome from Romulus to Trajan, of which the fragment remains, as recast by him into thirty-one Latin Lives of Illustrious Men, Romulus being the first of them, and Julius Cæsar the last in the series. He wrote also in Latin four books of 'Memorable Things,' a collection of anecdotes and interesting words or deeds of famous men, classified in each chapter, as, first Romans, then Externs, that is to say Greeks or barbarians, and lastly moderns.

Wandering one Good Friday among the mountains of Vacluse, it occurred to him, says Petrarch, to make the deeds of the elder Scipio, a favourite hero of his boyhood, the subject of an epic poem. No MS. of Silius Italicus had then been discovered, and the work seemed to him unattempted, save by Ennius. So he began at Vacluse his 'Africa,' and worked at it with zeal, leaving, however, its number of nine books to be completed in 1342. In the two first books Petrarch, after invocation of Christ and dedication to King Robert, makes the ghost of Publius Scipio tell his son in a dream the events of the Spanish war, adding prophecy of his success in Africa, and of the future of Rome. The third book tells the origin of Carthage, and that also of Rome, as recounted by Lælius, Scipio's ambassador to Syphax. In the fifth canto we are in the midst of war, Syphax is vanquished, and we are told the fate of Sophonisba; in the sixth book Hannibal returns from Italy; the seventh contains the battle of Zama; the eighth, a Carthaginian embassy to Rome and peace established; the ninth, Scipio's return and

triumph. On the return Ennius is made to inform Scipio that Homer has appeared to him in a dream; and, while bidding him sing of Scipio, has told him that, after three hundred lustres, a youth named Franciscus, in a closed valley, sitting under laurel, should sing Scipio's deeds and the story of the Romans, in a poem called 'Africa.' And when, in the poem, Scipio is taken in triumph to the Capitol, Petrarch remembers that he also was taken up thither in triumph to receive a laurel crown. Petrarch never perfected his 'Africa,' and therefore kept it jealously from sight. It was magnified as an unknown wonder; and, after his death, there was doubt whether he had not fulfilled his threat that he should burn it for its incompleteness.

Petrarch
Laureate. It was before writing the last books of his 'Africa,' on the 1st of September, 1340, that Petrarch at Vacluse received in the morning a letter from the Roman Senate, calling him to receive the crown at Rome as poet laureate. On the same evening arrived a summons from the Florentine Robert de Bardi, who was Chancellor of the Paris University, bidding him come to receive at Paris a like honour. Tradition of the middle ages held that Virgil, Horace, and Statius had been so crowned, and that this was a custom dropped out of use by decay of the Roman empire, but which had been revived in the thirteenth century. Petrarch, who had used all his interest, and whom it had cost much trouble to attain this object of his ambition, professed that he must prove his right to be crowned in the Roman Capitol, by submitting himself to the examination of the learned King Robert of Naples. For two or three weeks, therefore, he was in the King's society at Naples, and it was then that King Robert requested the dedication to himself of Petrarch's 'Africa.' A day of public trial was appointed, and this trial was continued through a second and a third day, at the end of which King Robert declared Petrarch worthy of the laurel crown. He went then to receive it, in a robe which the king had furnished him, and the ceremony was performed on the 8th of April, the first day of Easter, in the year 1341. Petrarch delivered a short discourse on a text from Virgil, after which a senator made a speech, and placed, with applause of the crowd, the laurel crown upon the poet's head. The old Stefano

Colonna then delivered an eulogy, and the company proceeded to the cathedral, where the poet caused his crown to be hung on the altar. A document was finally presented to him, certifying that he had been crowned Laureate as Poet and Historian, and that he was made a citizen of Rome. Thus Petrarch first gave life to the office of Poet Laureate.

Friendly business presently detained the laureate in Parma, whither he returned, and where he bought and rebuilt a house that is yet standing. In 1342 the Pope rewarded one of his poems with the Priory of Migliarino, in the diocese of Pisa. In the same year his brother Gerard became a Carthusian, and retired to a house in the wild region of Montrieu. Petrarch was now living partly in Avignon, partly in Vaucluse, where he was again active in song about Laura; and this was about the time of the birth of his daughter Francesca. In the year following, Petrarch wrote the three books on 'Contempt of the World,' which he himself called 'Secretum Suum,' wherein he tells that there came to him a heavenly lady, Truth, in a vision, with Saint Augustine, and that the lady bade Augustine instruct him concerning his misdeeds, whereupon arose dialogue for three days in the presence of Truth. In the first day, or book, Augustine shows that man is the cause of his own sorrows, and that the desire to be free from them is effectual only when it destroys all earthly passion. In the other two books the saint deals with Petrarch personally, discussing in the second his avidity of praise, desire of earthly wealth, anger, distaste for life, and so forth; and, in the third, with much particular confession of fault by the poet, love and ambition, but, as has been said, with no hint of discredit in his relations to the mother of his son and daughter.

Petrarch learnt also a little Greek from the Greek Barlaam, who was at this time in Avignon; but though he possessed Greek MSS., he could not read them without Latin gloss, and begged of Boccaccio a Latin translation of Homer, which Boccaccio sent to him in 1361. There were, according to a letter of Petrarch's, at that time in Florence and Pisa but four or five men who cared to know anything of Greek, one in Bologna, one in Sulmona (the birthplace of Ovid), but in Rome not one.

At the end of 1343 his friend King Robert's death caused

Petrarch to be sent on a political errand to Naples, but he achieved nothing, and left in disgust a city of which the young nobles were of roughest manners, and where real fights of gladiators were held for the entertainment of the court and people. It was after leaving Naples, when, at Parma, he saw all North Italy confusedly in arms, that he wrote, as a patriot, the canzone 'Italia Mia.' In the winter of 1345 he was again at Avignon, writing a friendly letter to Cicero. Pope Clement VI. would have made him his secretary, but he preferred leisure and independence. Neither would Petrarch accept any office involving care of souls. He had trouble enough, he said, with the care of his own soul. But he accepted a canonry at Parma, and, after visiting his brother in his monastery, wrote two books, 'De Otio Religiosorum.' In May, 1347, Cola Rienzi, whom Petrarch had known when he came with a Roman embassy to the Pope at Avignon, suddenly became master of Rome as tribune of the people. Petrarch, a fearless and enthusiastic patriot, throbbed then with a hope that Rome would be again a worthy Queen of Italy, and wrote in warm sympathy to Rienzi and to the Roman people, denouncing the fallen nobility as tyrants and robbers, that were not even Italian, but bred by the Rhine and Rhone. In Rienzi he saw a new Romulus, a third Brutus, and promised him the celebrations of his verse. When Rienzi summoned the Pope back to Rome his messenger was waylaid on the road to Avignon, and his letters were torn. The indignant Petrarch wrote to Rienzi exhortations that he should not suffer this wrong to pass unpunished. At open war now with the opinion of Papal Avignon, Petrarch returned to Italy. When he reached Genoa he found reason to write to Rienzi in a fellow-patriot's tone of admonition and reproach. At Parma he heard of the downfall of the tribune, whom the people had deserted. The Colonnas, too, were fallen. "No other ruling family on earth is dearer to me," said Petrarch; "but dearer to me is the public, dearer is Rome, dearer is Italy." In 1347 Petrarch was at Padua, where he received a canonry from Jacopo da Carrara. He then lived sometimes in Padua, sometimes in Parma or Verona. In Parma, in 1350, he was made an archdeacon. He was at Verona and also at Parma in 1348, the year of the great plague in Italy and France, that spread in the two following

years through other lands, and was preceded by a dreadful earthquake in North Italy. A hundred and twenty thousand are said to have perished in three months in overcrowded Avignon. That plague-year, 1348, was the year of the death of ^{Petrarch's} Laura. She died on the 6th of April, and on the 19th of May he heard of her death at Parma, whither he had brought his son to be taught by Gilbert the grammarian. Grief for the death of Laura is expressed in the second part of the 'Trionfi.' Boccaccio, who is the oldest good authority concerning Petrarch, believed, with his friend Jacopo Colonna, that Laura was only an allegory for the poet's Laurel.

The first mention of Laura as a real person is by an anonymous writer, quoted in Professor Marsand's 'Biblioteca Petrarquesca,' who says that Laura was a maiden whom Petrarch loved, but whom he would not marry, though Pope Urban V. (not Pope till after Laura's death) desired to give her to him for wife. This story is repeated by Squarciafico, with the substitution of a possible Pope's name, and the addition that, as Petrarch would not marry her, she married somebody else. That is the whole testimony of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries to the actual existence of a Laura. In the year 1520 Alessandro Vellatello, who was twice in Avignon, pronounced some local traditions, as to the family of Laura, to be clearly false; and professed to have examined the church-registers of Cabrières, near Vaucluse, where he said he had seen that Laura, daughter of Henri de Chiaban, was born there in 1314. Here, therefore, he argued, we have the Laura of Petrarch. It was shown afterwards that there were no baptismal registers so old as 1314, and that no family named Chiaban ever lived in those parts; whereupon the local tradition set aside by Vellatello was revived, and Laura was said to have been of the noble family of de Sade. At last an Abbé de Sade, ambitious to confirm to his family the honour of numbering Petrarch's Laura with its ancestors, made out his case on behalf of a daughter of Audibert de Noves, named Laurette de Noves, who in 1325, in her eighteenth year, married Hugues de Sade, then aged twenty,—became the mother of eleven children, seven sons and four daughters,—and made her will on the 3rd of April, 1348. The de Sades were one of the chief families of Avignon in Petrarch's time. This theory of the identification of a lady

to whom Petrarch may have paid homage has since been generally received; but it has been disputed by Lord Woodhouselee and Professor Marsand, who argue that Laura must have died unmarried. In either case, and whoever may have been the lady Petrarch complimented by association with his verse, she could have borne in it no other name than Laura. But if her real name also was Laura, that accident may have helped to obtain for her the poet's show of homage. Such homage was conventional. So far, indeed, were the poets of those days from looking for a personal and literal interpretation of the customary variations on the proper theme of courtly song, that—as Dante never sang to the world his love for wife or mother, and as Petrarch never addressed a line in public to the mother of his children—so also, throughout the singing of their time, the public homage to a fair lady by any courtly poet seems to have implied usually or always, not that there were, but that there were not, private relations of familiar love between them.

In the autumn of 1350 Petrarch on his way to Rome first visited the Florence from which his father had been exiled. Thence Boccaccio, who had long admired his genius, sent forward a Latin poem to welcome him; then came himself to meet him, took him to his house, and established a friendship that continued to the end of Petrarch's life. On his return he was received with triumph at Arezzo, where the people showed him the house in which he had been born, and which the owner had not been permitted to enlarge or alter. He visited different towns of North Italy. In 1351 he was at Padua, burning more than a thousand of his own Latin poems and letters, and arranging those which he thought worthy to survive him, in three books of Poems, fourteen books of Letters to friends, and one to illustrious ancients, Cicero, for example, or Quintilian. There, too, he received from Florence, by the hand of Boccaccio, a solemn gift of his paternal estates, which the Republic had bought; and he was invited to Florence, to give life there to the three-year-old University. But, although he answered with the compliments of a pleased man, he never went again to Florence, and the vexed Florentines took back their gift. For Petrarch returned to Vacluse. In December, 1352, Clement VI. died, and was succeeded by Pope Innocent VI., who believed Petrarch,

because he read Virgil, to be a conjuror. In the following spring the poet left Vacluse for ever. He went to Milan, and for the next ten years dwelt there in a small town-house or at a pleasant country-retreat, living simply, sleeping little, and, as a poet and scholar, labouring incessantly with book and pen. He was flattered at Milan by that city's temporal and spiritual chief, Giovanni de' Visconti. Boccaccio warmly reproved his friend, a Florentine, for giving up his genius and liberty to an enemy of his country, whom he had himself called a cruel Polyphemus. But Petrarch gave up no liberty. He went in 1353 as Orator to the Doge Andrea Dandolo, commissioned to establish peace, if it might be, between Genoa and Venice. In the year following Giovanni Visconti died, and was succeeded by three violent nephews, who held rule in common. They all honoured Petrarch, and Petrarch was godfather to one of their sons. When the Emperor Charles IV. came through Italy on his way to Rome, Petrarch, who had hoped that an emperor might bring Italy peace, and who had written to the Emperor in that sense even from Vacluse, was invited to meet him at Mantua. And there the Emperor retained the poet eight days in his company, caused him to tell the story of his life, argued with him on the comparative advantages of active and solitary life, begged that he would dedicate to him his work on illustrious men, and conducted him on his way back beyond Piacenza. But the Emperor disappointed Petrarch's hopes, and, in a bold letter that was taken in good part, the poet told him so. In 1355 Petrarch was sent on a mission to the Emperor, who was rumoured to be meditating evil against Milan. He waited for him at Basle, went to him at Prague, and received from him the diploma of Count Palatine.

Between 1358 and 1360 Petrarch was writing for an exiled and unhappy ruler of Parma consolations of philosophy in two books, '*De Remediis utriusque Fortunæ*,' which have been translated into many languages. In March, 1359, Boccaccio visited him, stayed for some days at his small country-retreat of Garignano near Milan, and, on his return to Florence, sent him a copy of Dante. Towards the end of this year Petrarch gave up his town-house, in which he had been robbed, as it seemed, by his reprobate son who then lived with him, and went to lodge

in the Monastery of San Simpliciano. In the next year Petrarch represented the house of Visconti at the court of King John of France, returned from his captivity in England; King John's daughter, aged eleven, having been sold in marriage to the eight-year-old son of one of the Visconti for a large sum, which would contribute to the payment of the ransom. After the marriage ceremonies, Petrarch went at the end of the year 1360 to Paris. But France was then wasted with war and pestilence, and he refused the royal invitation to remain, as well as invitations from the Emperor, who sent him a gold cup. In the middle of 1361 Petrarch left Milan, whither, after the peace between England and France, disbanded soldiers brought turmoil, and were thought to have brought also the pestilence of which Petrarch's graceless son John died when he was giving promise of a better future. The poet then removed to Padua, where he married his daughter Francesca to a Milanese gentleman, who lived happily with her in her father's house. Danger of plague, however, caused Petrarch in the summer of 1362 to remove to Venice, taking his books with him, which he was resolved to give to the Venetian Republic as the foundation of a public library. The senate accepted his offer, and granted for Petrarch and his books a palace with two corner towers, which he was to occupy for life. Afterwards, when the books were dedicated to St. Mark, they went into Church custody and rotted.

Here in Venice Petrarch saw for the last time, in the summer of 1363, his friend Boccaccio, who came from Naples and was for three months his guest. Petrarch continued to live in Venice, making in summer frequent trips to Milan and Padua. In 1368 he sat with the princes at the marriage of Galeazzo Visconti's daughter with Edward III.'s son, Lionel Duke of Clarence. In 1366, having hope of Pope Urban V., Petrarch wrote to him, warmly urging his return to Rome; in the year following Urban did go to Rome, and received the congratulations of the poet; but in 1370 his Holiness returned to Avignon, where in the same year he died. Petrarch in urging the Pope Romeward had attacked the French and the taste of the Cardinals for the French wine. This brought on him, after the Pope's death, a bitter censure, to which he bitterly replied in

1371, "Contra cujusdam anonymi Galli calumnias." At that time this second Patriarch of Modern Literature, who had been for a year or two at Padua, in feeble health, lived in a house that he had built himself, two miles out of town, ^{Petrarch at Padua.} in the village of Arquà, on the southern slope of the Euganean hills. This—with a period of residence as canon in Padua, from the middle of November, at least, until January—was Petrarch's home at the time of Chaucer's first visit to Italy in 1372-3. He had removed to it in 1370, and there, subject to sudden fainting fits and attacks of fever, he lived chiefly on bread, water, and fruit; took only bread and water on Fridays, fasted often, and slept little. He had with him his daughter and son-in-law, with their family. His favourite little grandson Francesco, who had been thought the image of himself, was dead. He kept at least two horses, had an old chaplain, a household of domestics, and five or six copyists when he could get them. His income was from his benefices in the Church, of which the archdeaconry of Milan and the canonry in Padua were the most lucrative, especially when he was in residence at Padua, where it is more probable than improbable that Chaucer saw and spoke with him. Petrarch tells us in his 'Letter to Posterity,' that his hair had begun to turn grey at the age of five-and-twenty, and that after the age of sixty, when he was white-haired and partly bald, he wore spectacles, and that he then concerned himself more with history and religion than with poetry. Of his two last treatises, one was 'On Ignorance of One's-self and of many Things,' showing the vanity of philosophy, on occasion of a vote, that Francis Petrarch was a good but ignorant man, passed by four young Venetians, when there was a fashion in Venice for glorifying even above Christianity the Commentary of Averroes on Aristotle. The other work was a small treatise, 'On the Best Administration of a State,' written for his friend and patron Francesco da Carrara. To make peace for that friend with victorious Venice, Petrarch went to Venice late in September, 1373, but was too weak to address the senators until after a day's rest. When he came home he read for the first time his friend Boccaccio's 'Decameron,' and liked the last novel so well,—the tale of Patient Griselda, which, he said, none had been able to read without tears,—that he translated it into Latin as

‘De Obedientia et Fide Uxoria, Mythologia,’ and sent the translation to his friend with the last letter he ever wrote. As this was after Chaucer’s return from Italy, there can be no recollection of having had the tale from Petrarch’s living voice inferred from the lines by which it is introduced among the ‘Canterbury Tales.’ “Farewell friends, farewell letters,” are the closing words of that last letter of Petrarch’s, and a few weeks afterwards he died, on the 18th of July, 1374, two days short of the age of seventy-one.

The other Patriarch of Modern Literature—Boccaccio—born in 1313, was nine years younger than his friend Petrarch, whom he survived only by a year. Both had been born during the lifetime of Dante, Petrarch being a youth of seventeen, and Boccaccio a boy of eight, in the year when Dante died, a man of fifty-six, seven years before the birth of Chaucer. Chaucer’s age, therefore, was about forty-six at the time of the deaths of Petrarch and Boccaccio.

Giovanni Boccaccio was the son of a Florentine merchant.

Boccaccio. His mother was a Parisian, and his father had lived for a time in Paris. Finding him too studious to be a merchant, his father desired that he should study canon-law; he tried to do so, but his bent was in a different direction. He learnt Greek, and partly earned his livelihood as a Greek copyist. He wrote Latin expositions of ancient Geography, Mythology, and History. Then he gave play to his fancy in his mother tongue, and wrote prose and verse, in which are the first known examples of *ottava rima*. He never married, nor was he, like Petrarch, a churchman who might be enriched with benefices. Except that he was sometimes sent by Florence upon embassies, and that two years before his death at Castaldo, in 1375, he was appointed to deliver yearly lectures upon the Divine Comedy of Dante, he held no public appointment, and he had no great man for patron.

Those of his works which influenced the course of English literature will be spoken of hereafter in connexion with the writings they helped to suggest. Now, therefore, it is enough to say that Boccaccio’s Latin works were—‘A Genealogy of the Gods,’ in fifteen books; ‘On the Fortunes of Illustrious Men and Women,’ in nine books; a work ‘On Illustrious Women;’ and a

geographical work 'On the Names of Mountains, Woods, &c.' In Latin verse he imitated the eclogues of Virgil. In Italian are his Poems, his Romances, his 'Decameron,' of potent literary influence, and his 'Life of Dante,' with a commentary on the first sixteen cantos of the 'Inferno,' and a few letters.

The terrible Black Plague, or Great Mortality, of 1348, had spread over Asia from the extreme East to the Bos-
 phorus before it entered Europe by way of commercial Boccaccio's
Decameron. Florence, for which reason it was also called by historians the Plague of Florence, and thence spread over Europe. The scourge was renewed three times in the same century, in 1360, 1373, and 1382. When this most fatal of all Plagues in human history was, in 1348, raging in Florence, Boccaccio feigns that seven fair ladies, who met in the church of Sta. Maria Novella, after discourse together, agreed to take refuge two miles from the town, in a delicious country-house, surrounded by a bright garden. As they would need protectors, they took with them three young men, lovers of some, cousins or friends of the rest. In their gay retreat, when, during the heat of the day, they lay on the grass under the trees, the ladies and gentlemen told stories to one another. Every day had, in turn, one of the ten who was director of the entertainments and of the order of the story-telling. Under government, therefore, of one of the ten persons of the story, was each day of the ten-day period, or *Decameron*. On each day ten stories were told. And so, as he had brought into use the *ottava rima* and the custom of writing prose pastorals mixed with eclogues in verse, Boccaccio, by telling in this manner a hundred favourite stories with a charm never before given to the common speech, gave currency in Europe to the Eastern custom of connecting tales together by some thread of invention.

Of his poems, the 'Teseide'—source of Chaucer's 'Knight's Tale'—is a tale in octave rhyme, the first of its kind. His 'Filostrato'—source of Chaucer's 'Troilus and
 Cressida'—in the same measure, tells the love of the His Poems
and Ro-
mances. Trojan Troilus for Cressida. Troilus is entitled Filostrate, as a soldier in Love's service, or one vanquished by the joys and pains of love. Boccaccio's 'Ninfale Fiesolano,' or sport of the nymphs of Fiesole, and 'L'Amorosa Visione,' are of less mark; but his

pastoral poem of 'Admetus,' mingling verse and prose,—l'Ameto, *commedia delle ninfe Fiorentine*,—full of local allusion and rural scenery, is the first of its kind in modern literature. Boccaccio wrote also Sonnets and Canzone; but he set no great store by his rhymes. He preferred the graceful prose form into which he cast his romances, 'Il Filocopo,' 'L'Amorosa Fiammetta,'—in whom he is fabled to have dwelt on a love of his own for a natural daughter of King Robert of Naples,—and the 'Labyrinth of Love,' called also 'Il Cortaccio,' an allegorical vision not flattering to fair women.

English and
Italian con-
temporaries.

With these notes upon the new birth of literature in Italy, let us at once observe the connexion of time in our chief contemporary English writers. Sir John Mandeville was of about the same age as Petrarch, probably four years older, and the year of his death was about two years earlier than Petrarch's. The 'Vision of Piers Plowman' was written about twelve years before; and Chaucer's 'Canterbury Tales,' work of his ripest years, not until twelve years after the deaths of Petrarch and Boccaccio. John Wiclif, who was eleven years younger than Boccaccio, and whose execution and superintendence of our first complete translation of the Bible had occupied the last twenty-four years of his life, survived Boccaccio and Petrarch only by about ten years. Gower and Chaucer were contemporaries, who lived parallel lives, with only two or three years difference of age between them.

CHAPTER II.

PETRARCH says, in a letter about the Thule of the ancients, "I had no idle discourse on this matter with Richard, ^{Richard of Bury.} formerly the King of England's Chancellor, a man of ardent character, not ignorant of literature, and who, as he was born and bred in Britain, and was from his youth up curious beyond belief in hidden things, seemed most apt for the disentangling of especially such little questions. But he, either because he so believed, or because he was ashamed to confess ignorance (which is, now-a-days, the way with many who do not understand how great praise modesty brings to a man who, being not born to know everything, is willing frankly to own that he don't know what he don't know), or, perhaps, which I do not suspect, because he grudged me the knowledge of this mystery, answered that he certainly would satisfy my doubts, but not till he had returned home to his books, of which nobody had a greater plenty. For when I chanced to get his friendship he was a traveller transacting his lord's business at the apostolic see, namely, at that time when the first seeds of a long war between his lord and the King of France were sprouting, afterwards to yield a bloody harvest. Nor are the sickles laid aside yet, or the garners closed. But when this promiser of mine had departed, either finding nothing, or distracted by the weighty discharge of his duty in respect of the Papal injunctions, though often questioned by letters, he has satisfied my expectation no otherwise than by an obstinate silence. And so British friendship has given me none the more knowledge of Thule."¹ Petrarch's British friend with the great plenty of books was Richard Aungervyle, commonly called Richard of Bury; and he pleasantly stands at the head of the roll of our modern writers

¹ Petrarch Epist. de Rebus Familiaribus, lib. iii. ep. 1. Opera ed. Basil, 1554, p. 673, 4.

with a zealous treatise on the Love and the right Use of Books.

He was born in the year 1281,¹ at Bury St. Edmond's, in the county of Suffolk. His father was a Norman knight, who died in middle life, and left him to the care of his maternal uncles, who were of the family of Willoughby. They sent him to continue his studies at Oxford, where he distinguished himself so much by his acquirements in philosophy and divinity, that he was selected by the king as tutor to Prince Edward, afterwards King Edward III. In that office Richard of Bury preserved at court for some time a prudent silence between conflicting parties, while he won the hearty goodwill of his pupil. But when the time came for safe and energetic action in his pupil's interests, he made his worldly fortune by proving himself a devoted follower of the young prince and his mother.

Richard Aungervyle happened to be serving Edward II. as his treasurer in Guienne, when, in 1325, Queen Isabel betook herself to Paris. Isabel, daughter of that Philip the Fair of France who had brought the popes to Avignon, had, seventeen years before that time, been reported the most beautiful woman in Europe, when the weak King of England married her. The first rival she and England had in the King's affections was the favourite Gaveston. Grief then followed upon grief. While at home he was at odds with his barons, who had slain the favourite, King Edward was defeated by the Scots at Bannockburn. Ireland rebelled, too, but with less success. In England the people suffered heavily from pestilence and famine. The quarter of wheat rose to ten times its usual value. The poor fed upon roots, horses, dogs, rats,—nay, it is said even sometimes on their own dead. Of want came robbery; and there were so many hordes of robbers, that the men who were not thieves joined in bands that went out to do battle with those who were. The triumphant Scots poured in over the border, and even laid successful siege to Berwick. In Hugh de Spenser the weak King presently found another favourite, and this provoked his barons to a fresh rebellion. Though not victorious, the party of Lancaster, identified by the people with their own interests,

¹ M. Cocheris says 1287.

retained its strength; and it was between factions at court thus fiercely antagonist that Richard of Bury, as the tutor of the Prince of Wales, had to maintain prudent reserve. In 1322 the King was so far master of all but himself that he sent Thomas Earl of Lancaster to execution; but the people of England flocked to his grave as to that of a saint and martyr, until a party of Gascons were there stationed to deny them access. Thirty of his chief adherents were hanged, and the de Spensers, father and son, presently offended the Church by seizing the temporalities of four Lancastrian bishops. Among the barons imprisoned was Roger Lord Mortimer of Wigmore, who broke out of the Tower and escaped to France. To his prompting probably was due the sudden quarrel forced upon Edward II. by his wife's brother, Charles the Fair of France. The quarrel was raised chiefly on the plea that King Edward had not attended Charles's coronation or done fitting homage for Guienne. Queen Isabel, who was embroiled with the favourite de Spenser, then joined in a plot for the interests of her son against those of her husband; and to this plot Richard of Bury, her son's tutor, was actively a party.

It was suggested that, if Queen Isabel went to Paris as negotiator, the King of France would, for the arrangement of disputes with the King of England, concede favourable terms to his own sister. Isabel was sent, therefore, with a splendid retinue, and, on her arrival in Paris, Richard of Bury, the King's Treasurer in Guienne, gave her the money he had been collecting in that province. Edward's Lieutenant in Guienne sent twenty-four Lancers to arrest the disloyal Treasurer, and he was pursued by them to the very gates of Paris, where he fled for refuge to the campanile of the Franciscans.

Queen Isabel made terms humiliating to her husband. France added the suggestion, that, if Guienne were given to the Prince of Wales, Richard of Bury's pupil, the homage of the Prince of Wales would be accepted in lieu of that due from the King of England. The de Spensers, Hugh and his father, counselled Edward II. to assent to this, for they dared neither go to France with the King, nor be in England while he was absent. Prince Edward went, therefore, to France as Lord of Guienne; and, when there, remained with his mother, who had made

Mortimer steward of her household, and refused, for the present, to return to England. Richard of Bury stayed also with Queen Isabel, attached to the service of her son, his pupil.

When the mother and son did return, it was with an army of invaders that landed at Orwell, in Suffolk, towards the close of September, 1326. Their army was joined by both Lancastrians and Royalists, Isabel being supposed to mean only the removal of the favourite Hugh de Spenser, who was denounced by proclamation issued in the name of the Queen, the Prince, and the Earl of Kent, as "the manifest tyrant and enemy of God, of holy Church, and of our very dear lord the King, and of all the realm." King Edward fled to Wales. Old de Spenser, besieged by the Queen in Bristol, was taken, embowelled, and hanged at the age of ninety. Henry of Lancaster, the brother of the executed Thomas, pursued Hugh de Spenser, who, when taken, was crowned with nettles and hanged on a high gallows at Hereford. By the next Parliament that met, Edward II. was deposed; and so, in January, the Prince, whom Richard Aungervyle had sedulously served, became, early in his fifteenth year, Edward III. Eight months later the deposed King was murdered in Berkeley Castle by two of his keepers, his son ruling at that time under the control of Isabel and Mortimer. Mortimer's head was turned by his success, and he disdained the Earl of Lancaster, who was the young King's legal guardian. But about three years later Mortimer was seized by lords who had in their company the young Edward himself, resolved to break free from dictation. Mortimer then was impeached, and, on a November day in the year 1330, was hanged at Tyburn as a traitor.

These changes did not affect Richard de Bury's fortunes. Whether the influence was paramount of Isabel and Mortimer, or of the King himself, the scholar prospered in his pupil's reign. Immediately after the accession of Edward III. he was appointed Steward of the Palace and Treasurer of the Wardrobe, which office he resigned in September, 1329,¹ on being made Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal. In 1330 he was sent as ambassador to Pope

¹ An inventory of Edward III.'s crown jewels, made by Richard de Bury on resigning his care of the wardrobe, is printed in vol. x. of the 'Archæologia.'

John XXII. at Avignon; and it was then that he met Petrarch, who afterwards corresponded with him as a friend. The King's letter of introduction commended him to the Pope's favour as one who had bestowed assiduous care on Edward himself from his childhood, and for whom, as for one whose well-being he strongly desired, the King of England asked of his Holiness the benefices in the Pope's gift at Hereford, London, and Chichester, which had been held by a deceased archdeacon of Northampton. For, said the letter, Richard de Bury was a man whom the King knew to be "forecasting in counsel, worthy for his purity of life and conversation, stored with knowledge of literature, and circumspect in all affairs of business." Richard Aungervyle made costly appearance as Ambassador of England, with a following of twenty clerks and thirty-six equerries. His audience with the Vicar of Christ cost him five thousand marks, for it was useless to go to his Holiness on any business unless one could, as Walter Map had said, box his ears with a purse. The King's business having been settled to the King's wish, Richard de Bury was named chaplain to the Pope, and promise was made to him of the first bishopric vacant in England.

The first bishopric vacant after Aungervyle's return was that of Durham. Elections were legally free, and the Prior and Chapter of Durham, perhaps ignorant of the King's wish, chose for their bishop Robert de Graystones, Doctor of Theology and Sub-prior. The Archbishop of York signified assent to their choice, and Robert de Graystones, as bishop elect, presented himself to the King. Then he was told that the Pope had intended the bishopric for Richard de Bury, that the King would not contradict the Pope's choice, and that he refused, therefore, to confirm the election. The spirit of Grosseteste still lived in the English Church, resisting the Pope's interference in the distribution of the English benefices. Robert de Graystones held by his lawful right, and lost no time in its assertion by procuring his own consecration at York, followed by installation at Durham, and reception at Durham, as Lord Bishop, of the oath of fealty from the vassals of the see. That done, he went to Edward for his temporalities; but the indignant King refused to see him. On his return to Durham, Robert found the clerks of Richard de Bury in possession of his

Robert de
Graystones.

episcopal throne. Further contest was considered hopeless, and the Archbishop of York was obliged to annul the election of the Chapter, and absolve the Durham people from their oath of fealty. Robert de Graystones then retired from a contest in which he had not engaged from motives of personal ambition, but as an English Churchman resisting the right of the Pope to cancel by a word an election in complete accordance with the English law. He was distinctly on the right side of the question; and has left us a chronicle¹ containing in its last two chapters his own history of the election, written without bitterness, but in a spirit like that by which Grosseteste had been animated in his struggle against Papal interference with the rights and privileges of the English clergy.

Richard de Bury, who had, not long before, been appointed Treasurer of the kingdom, was consecrated Bishop of Durham by the Archbishop of Canterbury in December, 1333, and on the 5th of June next year installed by the Prior of Durham. He celebrated the occasion with a great feast, at which the young King and Queen, the Queen-mother Isabel, the King of Scotland, two archbishops, five bishops, and the great English and Scottish lords were present. The English and the Scots were then in contest, and their peaceful meeting at his installation in the frontier bishopric was a memorable honour to Richard of Durham. Before the end of the same year the new Bishop of Durham became Lord Chancellor, with the affairs of the Scots and of the French pressing upon his attention. When he returned the seals to the King, it was only to go abroad in his service as ambassador that he might exercise his own trusted sagacity in carrying out the peaceful policy he had advised. He went to the Court of Paris, to Flanders, Hainault, and Germany, and settled the terms of a treaty between the King of England and the Counts of Hainault and Namur, the Marquis of Juliers, and the Dukes of Brabant and Guelders. When he returned to Durham he was busy in procuring confirmation of the rights and privileges of his church. He assisted also, in 1337, as Commissioner of the government at the

¹ 'Historia de Statu Ecclesiæ Dunelmensis.' Published by the Surtees Society in 'Historiæ Dunelmensis Scriptores.' 1839.

assemblies held at York, Stamford, and Newcastle-on-Tyne, to discuss Scottish affairs. When his desires of peace were prostrated, he closed his career as a statesman. He returned, however, himself to Paris, bearing a declaration of war, and then came back to his diocese, when the last public act of his life was, during the King's prosecution of the French war, to conclude a two years' truce with the encroaching Scots. Thenceforth he lived retired among the books he loved, still drawing to himself as chaplains and companions the most learned English scholars of his time. To be his chaplain, and by scholarship to win the household affection of a man so influential with the King, was a step to promotion, sure enough to satisfy ambitious minds; while life with Richard Aungervyle housed the scholar among books, and gave him hourly access to the best library in England. Among Richard of Durham's chaplains were Thomas Bradwardine, afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury; Robert Holcot; Richard Fitzraufe, afterwards Archbishop of Armagh; Richard Bentworth, afterwards Bishop of London; Walter Seagrave, afterwards Bishop of Chichester; John Manduit, astronomer; Richard Kilmington, theologian; and Walter Burley, a great Aristotelian, who dedicated to Richard de Bury his Commentaries upon the Politics and Ethics. The Bishop is said to have made every week eight quarters of wheat into bread and given it to the poor, and to have regularly spent, in alms by the way, eight pounds when travelling between Durham and Newcastle; five pounds between Durham and Stockton, or Middleham; and five marks between Durham and Auckland.¹ His love for books was celebrated by him in the treatise entitled 'Philobiblon,' which he completed only a little while before his death at the episcopal residence of Auckland on the 14th of April, 1345. Let the spirit of the book speak for its writer, in a miniature copy, which ascribes to it no turn of thought or phrase that is not to be found in the original.

‘*Philobiblon*’

Consists of a Prologue and Twenty Chapters.

In the Prologue Richard of Bury, by Divine commiseration, Bishop of

¹ Collectanea ad Statum Civilem et Ecclesiasticum Comitatus Dunelmensis. Darlington, no date. (1774?)

Durham, greets his readers and expresses sympathy for good scholars whose study poverty impedes. The bent of his compassion has, he says, long disposed him to provide them with food and the use of books. For this purpose, acceptable to God, he has long been an ardent collector of books, and he now justifies his zeal, as he says, [though later times condemn in him excess of rhetoric,] in the lightest style of the moderns. For it is ridiculous in rhetoricians to use a grand style when light matter is discussed. Which treatise, he continues, will purge from excess the love we have had for books, will make manifest the purpose of our intent devotion, and will bring more clearly to light in twenty chapters the circumstances of what we have done. But because it is chiefly a dissertation on the love of books, it has pleased us, according to the custom of the ancient Latins, to name it friendly-wise by a Greek word 'Philobiblon.'

The first chapter opens the subject by commending Wisdom, and Books as the abode of Wisdom. In books, beyond a doubt, hast thou set thy desirable tabernacle, where the Most High established thee, the Light of Light, the Book of Life. For there all who seek thee find thee, and to those who knock it shall be quickly opened. In them the cherubim spread wide their wings, and the understandings of the students rise and look abroad from pole to pole, from the rising to the setting sun. Alexander, but for books, would have been without a memorial. The glory of the world would perish in oblivion if God had not provided mortals with the remedies of books. Towers crumble to the earth, but he whose book lives cannot die. And it is to be considered, lastly, what convenience of teaching is in books, how easily, how secretly, how safely in books we bare, without shame, the poverty of human ignorance. These are masters who instruct us without rods and cane, without words and wrath, and for no clothes or money. If you approach them they are not asleep, if you question them they are not secret, if you go astray they do not grumble at you; they know not how to laugh if you are ignorant. O books, ye only are liberal and free who pay tribute to all who ask it, and enfranchise all who serve you faithfully!

In his second chapter Richard de Bury shows how books are to be preferred to wealth and fleshly luxuries. Aristotle asked why the ancients gave prizes for gymnastics and bodily contests, but never decreed any reward for wisdom. Which question he thus solved: In gymnastic exercises the reward is better and more eligible than that for which it is given. But nothing can be better than wisdom; and, therefore, to wisdom there could be no prize assigned. Riches pertain to the aid of the body, books to the aid of the mind. Books declare and defend the Christian faith; and as books, which are truer counsellors than friends, are the most convenient masters, they deserve both love from us and magisterial honour.

The third chapter of 'Philobiblon' argues that books ought always to be bought, whatever their cost, when there are means of paying for them; except in two cases, when they are knavishly overcharged, or when a better time for buying is expected. That sun of men, Solomon, bids us buy books readily and sell them unwillingly. (Prov. xxiii.) "Buy the truth," he says, "and sell it not, also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding." The Bishop tells how the archphilosopher Aristotle, whom Averroes thinks to have been given as a sort of rule in nature, bought a

few books of Speusippus after his death for 72,000 sesterces [three Attic talents, 731*l.* 5*s.*]. Plato, before him in time, but behind him in doctrine, bought three books of Philolaus, the Pythagorean, for ten thousand denarii [354*l.*].¹ And then he reminds us of what Tarquin lost by grudging to pay for the books of the sibyl.

The fourth chapter compares the degenerate clergy to the progeny of vipers that destroy their parents, or to the young cuckoo that slays its foster-mother. They sucked at the paps of grammar till they learned to speak the mighty deeds of God; they were clothed with philosophy, and winged for flight to the door whence bread of heaven is dispensed. Or do they say that they have no such gifts? Then they have lost them, or refused them from the first. Books gave them their place of trust as pastors of the flock upon diverging ways that looks for guidance to their way and word, and that is held to recompense them with its milk and wool. They take the left-hand road, are spotted with thefts, homicides, and immodesties of many sorts, are given into the hands of justice, and the people cry of each offender, "Crucify him, crucify him! If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend." But then, say the books, let the wretched man remember us, that he may escape the peril of approaching death. We run out to meet the prodigal son. The book not unknown is held out to be read, and, at a little reading of one stammering through fear, the power of the judge is dissolved, the accuser withdrawn, death put to flight. O precious reading of the psalter, that deserves henceforth from this itself to be called the Book of Life. Laymen must bear secular judgment, that sewn in sacks they may swim out to Neptune, or planted in the ground bear fruit to Pluto, or by the fire offer themselves as fat holocausts to Vulcan, or, at any rate, hang and become victims to Juno; whilst our pupil, at the reading of one book of life, is commended to the custody of the Pope, and rigour is changed into favour; so death is averted from the clerical nursling of books.

Yet, complain books, in these evil times we are cast out of our place in the inner chamber, turned out of doors, and our place taken by dogs, birds, and the two-legged beast called woman. But that beast has always been our rival, and when she spies us in a corner with no better protection than the web of a dead spider, she drags us out with frown and violent speech, laughing us to scorn as useless, and soon counsels our being changed into costly head-gear, fine linen, silk and scarlet double dyed, dresses and divers trimmings, linens and woollens. And so, complain the books still, we are turned out of our homes, our coats are torn from our backs, our backs and sides ache, we lie about disabled, our natural whiteness turned to yellow—without doubt, we have the jaundice. Some of us are gouty, witness our twisted extremities. Our bellies are griped and wrenched, and are consumed by worms; on each side the dirt cleaves to us, nobody binds up our wounds, we lie ragged, and weep in dark corners, or meet with Job upon a dunghill, or, as seems hardly fit to be said, we are hidden in the abysses of the sewers. We are sold also like slaves, and lie as unredeemed pledges in taverns. We are thrust into cruel butteries, to be cut up like sheep and cattle, committed

¹ Aul. Gell. Noct. Attic. iii. c. xvii.

to Jews, Saracens, heretics, and pagans, whom we always dread as the plague, and by whom some of our forefathers are known to have been poisoned. Our gentle birth is traduced daily, while wretched compilers, translators, and transformers impose on us as new authors' names. Ah, how often do you pretend that we who are old are just born, and call us sons who are fathers! How do we suffer from translators who presume to turn us from one language into another, not knowing the idiom of either! We are given up, lastly, to painters ignorant of letters, and consigned to goldsmiths, that we, who are the light of faithful souls, may become repositories of gold leaf, as if we were not the sacred vessels of wisdom. The ploughman respects his carts, his harrows, flails, and spades; the retired soldier honours his shield and sword; only the ungrateful clerk neglects the sources of his credit.

The next chapter tells how the good clergy used, not only to commune with books, but to write them, and are, therefore, to be remembered with perpetual blessings. But now Thersites wields the armour of Achilles, the choice trappings of the coursers lie strewn under the asses' feet, the blinking night-birds rule the eagles' nests, the book of the bibbers is preferred to the book of the fathers, there is more care to drain a cup than to emend a codex, and to their cups they are not ashamed to add music rivalling in lasciviousness that of Timotheus.¹ Our regular canons neglect the rule of Augustine, that books are to be asked for at certain hours every day, but the reverend fathers carry bows and arrows, arms and bucklers, give alms to their dogs, not to the poor, use dice and draughts, and those things which we are used to forbid secular men. So that we need not wonder if we are not thought worthy to be looked upon. Turn, therefore, reverend fathers, to your books.

The mendicant friar, as he used to be, is praised in the next chapter (the sixth), and contrasted with the mendicant friar as he is, concerned only for three things, his belly, clothes, and house, never considering the crow nor the lily which the Most High feeds and clothes. The people, says Richard de Bury, fable that you tempt boys with apples into your orders, and that, when they have professed, you do not instruct them; but, when they should be learning, send them begging, to catch at the favour of their friends, to the offence of their parents, their own peril, and the hurt of the order. No wonder that unwilling boys, who have not been compelled to learn, grow into ignorant teachers. Against the law you yoke the ox and the ass together to the plough, when you commit the culture of God's field to the learned and the unlearned. Paul ordered these three things to be brought him by Timothy, instead of all his household stuff: his cloak, his books and parchments: affording a

¹ Timotheus (born B.C. 446) added more strings to the ancient lyre and complexity to the old simple songs. As he was also author of a poem, Semele, considered to be indecent, his multiplication of strings caused controversy, and was argued to be an innovation sensual and hurtful to morals. He was publicly reprimanded, and all the strings of his lyre that exceeded the orthodox seven were ordered to be cut; but he is said to have saved them by pointing to a small statue of Apollo, in which the lyre had as many strings as his own.

pattern to evangelical men, that they should wear the habit of their order, have books for the sustainment of study, and parchments for writing, which the apostle lays most stress on, saying, "but especially the parchments." Truly the clerk who cannot write is basely mutilated. The man carried a writer's inkhorn by his side, who set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh (Ezekiel ix.); figuratively suggesting that a man who cannot write must not presume to preach repentance.

In the seventh chapter 'Philobiblon' deplotes the destruction of books by war and fire; weeps for the lost library of the Ptolemies, for all the store of knowledge that was dissipated in the smoke of its burning, for the books lost also in other ancient wars; and rejoices at the thought of the books that Seleucus brought back from the Persians into Athens, to be placed on cedar shelves, with labels of gold and ivory for each partition. On which the volumes themselves, reverently brought, are sweetly arranged, so that none impedes the entrance of another, or hurts its brother by too close a pressure.

In the eighth chapter Richard de Bury writes of his own manifold opportunities of gathering books from all quarters. He tells of his delight from youth in intercourse with men of letters and lovers of books, his place in the household of King Edward III., that gave him larger liberty of visiting at will, and, as it were, beating the choicest covers of libraries, private or public, clerical or lay. As the King's Chancellor and Treasurer, next to the discharge of his duty to the court and kingdom, was his care to search for the hiding-places of books. His desire for books, especially old books, was widely known; it was reported that his favour was more easily to be won by books than by money. Therefore, when his place with the King gave him power strongly to advance desires of great and small, instead of other gifts, there flowed in on him decrepit volumes, precious in his sight. The stores of the noblest monasteries were opened, chests were unlocked, and astonished books raised from their sepulchres. Books, once most delicate, lay lifeless, befouled by mice and gnawed by worms; and those once clothed in purple and fine linen, lying in dust and ashes, seemed to have become homes of the moths. To these he sat down with delight, some given to him, some sold to him, some lent to him for a time. Many, seeing them to be his chief pleasure, studied to give him all books they could spare; "and," he adds, "as I took care so to expedite their affairs that they were gainers, justice came to no hurt." When sent on embassies to the Roman Chair, and to the Court of France, and to other kingdoms, he took with him his love of books. How his heart rejoiced when he visited Paris, the world's paradise; there were delightful libraries, there were academic meads! There, with loosened purse-strings, he scattered money with a glad heart, and redeemed books beyond price with dirt and sand. From earliest youth, too, he had sought the conversation and companionship of the learned; such were the chosen comrades of his journeys, such sat with him at table, and were in almost constant fellowship with him. But justice looking down from heaven sometimes gave them well-earned promotions and dignities, by which he lost the enjoyment of them. Again, never having disdained the poverty of religious mendicants, but having everywhere cherished them kindly for the love of God, they were pecu-

liarly zealous to content his desires, and searched for him through many provinces, in certain hope of reward. If a devout sermon resounded from the Roman Court, or for new reasons some question were being ventilated,—if Parisian solidity, now more studious of antiquity than of the subtle working out of truth,—if English perspicacity, which, while ancient lights pour through it, emits always new rays of truth,—added anything to the substance of knowledge or the setting forth of faith,—this, while yet fresh, was poured immediately and unaltered into his ears. When he visited towns where these religious orders had libraries, he was not slow to visit their chests, and whatever repositories of books they might have; for there, amidst the utmost poverty, he found stores of the utmost wealth. Wealthiest in this way, and most liberal, were the Preaching Friars. There was money also to engage the services in France, Germany, and Italy, of those who bought and sold books. Books were sought and well paid for among masters of rural schools and teachers of country boys. Moreover, he had always at hand in his halls no small number of antiquaries, writers, binders, correctors, illuminators, and generally of all who could labour usefully in the service of books. Finally, persons of either sex and every degree could with a knock open the door of his heart. All were admitted who brought books, so that there was a constant flight to him of books of all sorts, as to a loadstone by which they were attracted.

In his ninth chapter Richard de Bury shows that the ancient students exceeded the modern in fervency of learning. Sophocles wrote of *Cedipus* at the age of a hundred. Archimedes was killed because he would not speak nor raise his head from his work on a figure of geometry. Minerva seems to have made the round of the nations. She has visited the Indians, Babylonians, Egyptians, Greeks, Arabians, and Latins. She forsook Athens and next Rome, has passed out of Paris, and now happily reached Britain, the most notable of the islands. From which miracle many conjecture that as the wisdom of Gaul already grows lukewarm, so also her warfare languishes almost emasculate. [This was written not long after Edward III. had quartered the French lilies with the arms of England, and called himself King of France. The battle of Crécy was fought in the year following that of Richard de Bury's death.]

The tenth chapter of 'Philobiblon,' with a glance at heresies, speaks of the gradual growth of knowledge, and of the author's provision for his scholars of a Greek and Hebrew Lexicon.

In the eleventh chapter Richard de Bury tells us that he never much cared to acquire volumes of civil law, but that they are useful things in their way, like the scorpion in treacle, as Aristotle said of logic. Sciences are delightful, but laws, the yokes of princes thrown over the horns of their subjects, have more in them of the empire of will than of the judgment of reason. Therefore, as laws are neither arts nor sciences, law books are books of neither, and their faculty cannot be numbered among the sciences, though by an appropriate word it might be called geology. [A science that is of the earth, earthy; this joke being an accidental use, the first in our language, of the name of a science that now lays open, in the great book of the earth itself, the divine thoughts of its Creator.]

Richard de Bury's twelfth chapter is a short one on the use and need of grammar, and it tells how he has ordered foreign words to be noted in vocabularies for the aid of readers who are impeded by them, and how he has laboured to renew the life of many old books of the grammarians in emended editions, that therewith he might pave the highway of knowledge, so that future scholars should walk forward without stumbling.

The thirteenth chapter is a vindication of the use of poetry, in which Richard Aungervyle quotes Bede with the title of the Venerable, as an authority for spiritual use that may be made of reading fables of the heathen.

The fourteenth chapter treats of those who ought most to love books, princes and prelates, judges and teachers, and all who direct affairs; and here, besides quoting the ancients, Richard de Bury refers to the 'Polycraticon' of John of Salisbury, the reflection that God, who fashioned the hearts of men, has willed that a Book, of which He ordained the continual reading and use as the soul's healthiest daily food, should be, as it were, the antidote to all their ills.

The fifteenth chapter is on the manifold effect of the knowledge that is contained in books. A man cannot serve books and mammon. Books show us now the creator now the creature, bid us survey the antarctic pole, the galaxy of stars, and reach to the First Cause of All. Books also speak to princes boldly in the chamber from which man's voice is shut out.

The next chapter, upon the writing of new books and repair of old ones, speaks of our Saviour's exercising the office of a writer, when stooping down he wrote with his finger on the ground, and exclaims, "Oh, singular serenity of writing, at whose making the Artificer of the world, at whose tremendous name every knee bends, bowed down!"

The seventeenth chapter of 'Philobiblon' is on the cleanly handling and orderly keeping of books. Let not the clergy, it says, touch them with unclean hands, unclasp them too hastily, or, after use, throw them aside not duly closed, for a book needs to be kept with very much more care than a shoe. Perhaps you will see a bull-necked youth sitting sluggishly at his study, and when the cold is sharp in winter-time, and his wet nose, at the pinch of frost, runs into drops, he does not condescend to use his handkerchief till he has wetted the book beneath with its vile dew. I would give such a one, instead of a book, a cobbler's apron. He has a nail like a giant's, full of stinking filth, wherewith he marks the place of anything that pleases him. He disperses innumerable short straws, which he sticks in different places with their ends in sight, that the straw may restore to him what he cannot keep in his memory. These straws, which disagree with the stomach of the book, and which nobody takes out, first stretch the binding, and then, negligently forgotten, rot. He is not afraid to eat fruit and cheese over an open volume, and carelessly to pass his cup hither and thither over it; and because his alms-bag is not handy, he will discharge his crumbs into the books. With continual garrulity he never ceases to bowwow with his companions; and while he adduces a multitude of arguments devoid of sense, he moistens with sputterings of spittle the book spread out on his lap below. What more! he next rests on the book with folded arms,

short study inviting long repose ; and, to repair his crumpling, he bends back the margins of the leaves to the no small hurt of the volume.

The rains pass, and the flowers appear on the earth ; then the scholar whom I describe, a neglecter rather than an examiner of books, will stuff his book with primrose, and rose, and quatrefoil. Then he will use for turning over the volumes hands wet and pouring with sweat. Then he will come upon the white parchment everywhere with dusty gloves, and, with a forefinger clothed in old skin, will hunt over the page, line by line. Then at the prick of a biting flea, the sacred book is tossed away, which is yet scarcely shut for the next month, and so swells with the dirt collected in it, that it will not close easily when one tries to shut it.

He objects to boys who, having good books to copy from, deface their margins with impudent scrawls ; to the thieves who cut away clean margins for use as letter-paper ; to wet crying children, who finger and daub books shown them for their admiration of an ornamented letter. Books should be read only with clean hands ; damage should be repaired before it spreads. Moses (Deuteronomy xxxi.) taught how to take care of books. "Take the book," he said, "and put it in the side of the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God." O fit place and convenient library, which was made of imperishable Shittim wood, and covered over with gold inside and out. But our Saviour, too, by His example, excludes negligence in treatment of books, as is read in the 4th chapter of Luke ; when He had finished reading He did not give the book again to the minister till He had first closed it with His most holy hands.

In the next, the eighteenth, chapter of his 'Philobiblon,' Richard de Bury justifies himself against his detractors, and says that he has long had a rooted purpose to found a hall in the University of Oxford, and place his books in it for the use and benefit, not only of the scholars of that hall, but of the whole University.

In the nineteenth chapter he proceeds to explain the plan of his hall, given to a company of scholars as an almsdeed for his own soul and the souls of his parents, and for the souls of King Edward III. and Queen Philippa. A catalogue has been made of the books given, and they are to be lent out to scholars and masters on a certain plan. Five scholars deputed by the master of the hall are to have custody of the books, of which five, three, and never fewer, shall be competent to lend any books, for inspection and use only ; none may go beyond the walls of the house for copying and transcribing. A book shall not be lent to any person not of the company of scholars of the hall, unless there be a duplicate of it, and then only when security is taken that exceeds the value of the book itself. But to scholars of the hall there shall be free use of all the books, the scholar's name and the day on which a book is taken by him being noted down. He may not lend it to another without assent of three of the aforesaid keepers, when the name of the other borrower is to be substituted for his own. All must swear that they will use the books only for inspection or study, and never carry them beyond bounds of the city of Oxford and its suburbs. The keepers of the library must make an annual report to the master of the house ; there must be also annual inspection of the catalogue and shelves ; and every borrower must show a book he is using to the keeper once in a twelvemonth, and

may ask to see his security for the return of it. Whoever loses a book must pay for it, and any profit falling to the keepers of the library must be spent only upon the repairing of the volumes.

In his twentieth and last chapter, Richard de Bury desires to be prayed for, and exhorts students how they shall devoutly pray to the Redeemer and to the Father of Mercy, to the Blessed Virgin and Queen Mother, and to St. Cuthbert the Confessor, whose flock he had, though unworthy, taken upon himself to feed.¹

These were the thoughts of the powerful bishop who chose for his friends Holcot and Bradwardine; Manduit, skilled in astronomy and medicine, whose mathematical tables remained long in use; Walter Burley, the acute Scotist philosopher and expert scholar in Aristotle, whose active intellect produced a library of treatises; and Fitzraufe, afterwards Archbishop of Armagh, strong enemy to the abuse of their privileges by the Mendicant friars, against whom he wrote a book, and who accused him to the Pope of heresy. Fitzraufe died at Avignon in 1359.

Much as he loved the backs and bellies of his volumes, Richard de Bury knew how to love them yet more for the souls within their bodies, and for the good uses to which they could be put. It was, as we have seen, a living delight to him to place his library

¹ There are MSS. of 'Philobiblon' in the British Museum (Harl. No. 3224; 'Cotton. Faustina,' p. 158); in the Bodleian (Digby Collection, No. 147) at Trinity College, Oxford; in Bishop Cosin's library at Durham; and a few churches in England, besides those upon the Continent. 'Philobiblon' was first printed at Cologne in 1473, in a book of forty-eight leaves, without paging or head-line. It has red initial letters to the chapters, and is printed in Gothic characters that exactly resemble those of a clear MS. Ten years later it was reprinted at Spire. It was twice reprinted at Paris in 1500, and its fifth edition—its first English edition—was that published at Oxford, in 1599, by Thomas James, in sixty-two pages, with four pages of prefatory dedication to Thomas Bodley, a page prefixing Richard of Bury's Life, from Bale, and eight appended pages containing a list of authors whose names would appear in a catalogue of Oxford MSS. An English translation of the 'Philobiblon,' made by John B. Inglis, was published by Rodd, the bookseller, in 1832. From three MSS. in the Imperial Library, Paris, M. Hippolyte Cocheris collated the best modern library edition of the 'Philobiblon,' Paris, 1856, in two vols. fcap. 8vo., of which one gives the Latin text, the other its first translation into French, prefaced with biographical, bibliographical, and literary notices, and followed by eighteen *pièces justificatives*. All this illustrative matter has been translated into English for an American reprint of the same Latin text, face to face with Inglis's English translation. That 'First American edition . . . collated and corrected, with notes by Samuel Hand,' was published at Albany in 1861. This volume, or the original edition by M. Cocheris, is best adapted to the uses of the student.

at the poor scholar's service, and attend also to the poor scholar's back and belly, while he stocked his head as a not slighted guest at Bishop's Auckland. He desired that his books after his death should still live and give life.

As early as the year 1290 the monks of Durham had begun to build on a piece of land which they had bought as a place of study for their novices in the north suburbs of Oxford. Richard de Bury partly endowed this Hall, and left to it, as we have seen, his library, containing more volumes than all the other bishops in England had then in their custody. The books bequeathed by him were kept in chests, for use as he directed, until a library was built for them in the time of Henry IV., when they were put into pews or studies, and chained to them. In this manner Richard de Bury's books were kept for use of the scholars of Durham College and of the University until the College was dissolved by Henry VIII., and the books were conveyed, some to Duke Humphrey's library, remaining there until the time of Edward VI., and others to the library of Balliol College. Those that remained behind came into the possession of the king's physician, Dr. George Owen, of Godstow, when he and William Martyn obtained of King Edward VI. the site of Durham College. The ruined buildings were transferred by Owen and Martyn in the year 1544 to Sir Thomas Pope, who repaired them and re-established them as a place of study, thenceforth to be called Trinity College.¹

To tell of his endeavour to make books serviceable to the restoration of learning is the main purpose of Richard de Bury's 'Philobiblon,' which is not so much the essay of a bibliomaniac as of a rich and learned man-of-the-world who justifies his extreme zeal in book-collecting on the only high and valid grounds. Though he carries with him as a writer no small handful of the overblown flowers of mediæval rhetoric, it is the man whom we see, with a frank face and a firm tread, not hidden behind the flowers that he carries. That "lightest manner of the moderns," in which Richard Aungervyle professed to write, he did so far attain as to make his book a brief one,

¹ Antony à Wood's 'History and Antiquities of the University of Oxford,' ed. J. Gutch, vol. ii. p. 910-11, and of the 'Colleges and Halls,' pp. 517, 527.

pleasant and ingenious even where it is most rhetorical, but thoroughly individual and hearty wherever it had something of home truth to say and meant to speak it home. His account of his reason for book-collecting and directions for the future keeping of his library are quite simple and clear. His representation of the comfort that there is in books as silent counsellors is terse as it is true. There is no mincing of words in his winter and summer sketches of the sort of mediæval scholar with whom books suffered much by contact, while the handler of them gained as little as might be. Undoubtedly Richard de Bury was more man of the world than scholarly recluse, much as his liberal mind relished intellectual enjoyments and the friendliest domestic intercourse with learned men. He had held his own at court with clever suppleness before he staked his future fortunes, honestly we may well believe, upon advocacy of the Prince's cause against the King's. He allowed himself to be forced as the Pope's nominee, against the will of the Chapter, into the Bishopric of Durham; but he made liberal use as Bishop of his wealth arising from court favour. For a Lord Chancellor he was, at least, candid in declaring law to be no art or science, and in regarding law books as too simply an exposition of that which has been ordained by the arbitrary will of men in power. 'Philobiblon' shows an equal candour in the way of telling that, when Richard de Bury received, as Lord Chancellor, gifts of the books that were his chief delight, since he took care to expedite the causes of the givers, "justice did not suffer." Value was given for the books; the suitor had his payment in kind from the judge; and so the books thus given to him he might fairly consider himself to have bought. But he does not tell us, and we do not think, that for a bribe of books the causes he decided went against his own judgment of right, or of the bad law superseding right. He says only that they were expedited. That too is bribery, but not of the basest sort. And as to that he has only himself for an accuser.

Among the learned Englishmen who lived for a time at Auckland as the Bishop's chaplains and familiar friends, and who drew some part of their knowledge from his library, two were in and after their own time especially famous among our writers, Robert Holcot and Thomas Bradwardine. They survived their

friend and patron for four years, when they both died of the Great Mortality—the Plague of Florence—in the same year, 1349.

Robert Holcot, the Dominican, who was born and educated at Northampton, was, at the time of his death in that plague-year, 1349, General of the order of the Austin Friars. As teacher of Theology at Oxford, he was then delivering a course of lectures on Ecclesiastes,¹ of which there remain his comments on the first seven chapters. He was, in philosophy, a defender of Nominalism. As a student he is said never, by his own act, to have lost an hour. He was distinguished also among Preaching friars for his eloquence. He wrote many works,² of which the chief are four books on opinions, ‘Super Sententias.’ There are six main questions in the first of these books and four in the second; there is one only in the third, and in the fourth book there are eight. Each main question heads a collection of subordinate questions, and the character of all is, not that they seek an explanation but a settlement of faith. They are questions, beginning not with a Why, but with a Whether, upon such matters theological as, “Whether a man, being under grace, by assent to the articles of faith deserves eternal life?” with knotty arguments upon Freewill, upon the three Persons of the Deity, upon the Justice of Divine Rule. It is asked, Whether God foreknew that He should produce the world? Whether the devils fell by their own will? Whether the Son of God could become incarnate? That is the single question of the third book. Whether the Body of Christ really and truly exists in the Bread of the Sacrament? Whether Confession to the priest is necessary and salutary? And so on to the last question, Whether eternal happiness is the reward of the good wayfarer through life?—man being throughout the argument logically represented as any wayfarer, “quilibet Viator.” Then follow upon the consideration of these questions conferences and discussions on the Imputability of Sin, and other subjects calling forth all the acuteness of the mediæval theologian.

¹ ‘Trithemius de Scriptoribus Ecclesiasticis,’ ed. 1494, fol. 90.

² A complete edition of Holcot’s works was published at Strasburg in three volumes, and single works have been frequently reprinted on the Continent, at Paris, Venice, Basle, Spire, Bruges, Hagenau, and Reutlingen.

Holcot wrote also single books on the Seven Mortal Sins, on the Origin, End, and Remedy of Sin, on the Immortality of the Soul, on the Book of Wisdom, on the Song of Songs, Moralizations of Histories. He wrote also, among other unpublished works, Sermons and Scholastic Lectures, Commentaries on the twelve Lesser Prophets and the four Evangelists, and books on the Allegories of the Old Testament, on the Allegories of Ovid, on the Stars and on the Serpent, on the Favourers of Heretics, and on the Liberty of Faith. There have been falsely ascribed to him a dietary and a book on the game of chess.¹

His other
writings.

Upon the authority of a MS. of the 'Philobiblon' at Corpus Christi College, Oxford,² and another at Venice,³ the authorship even of Richard de Bury's work has been given to Robert Holcot in Echard's literary history of the Dominicans; but we have seen that internal evidence places the true authorship beyond question. Holcot no doubt copied his patron's treatise, and may have set his name to a copy which, being recopied from his MS., would be wholly attributed to him by an ignorant transcriber.

More than half a century after his death we have evidence of the popularity of Holcot's writings in the familiar quotation of him by Thomas Hoccleve, when, repentant of the misrule of his life, that disciple of Chaucer tells of the flatteries he had been too weak to resist, and quotes an example of the wise Ulysses with which Holcot had backed Solomon's wisdom:

"Holcotë seith upon the book also
Of Sapience, as it can testifie,
Whan that Ulixes sailid to and fro
By meermایدës, this was his policie:
All erës of men of his compaignie

¹ Zedler's 'Universal Lexicon,' Leipz. und Halle, 1735, contains a list of continental editions of Holcot's writings, and one or two details probably derived from them, of which, with a single fact from Tanner's *Bibl. Brit. Hib.*, I have added the substance to the brief record of Trithemius.

² No. 1634, inscribed 'Philobiblon R. de Bury, quem librum compilavit Rob. Holcot ordinis Prædicatorum, sub nomine dicti episcopi.'

³ Inscribed 'Philobiblon magistri Roberti Holkoth, Angli, ordinis Prædicatorum.'

With wex he stoppè leet for that they noght
 His song sholde heerë, lest the armonie
 Hem might unto swich deedly sleep han broght,
 And bond himself unto the shippës mast,
 So thus hem all savëd his providence."

Thomas Bradwardine, the profound Doctor, of an old family named after a village on the Wye still called Bradwardine, was born at Chichester,¹ or, Bale says, at Hartfield, in the diocese of Chichester, at some time in the middle of the reign of Edward I.² He graduated at Merton College and was Proctor in the University of Oxford in the year 1325. He proceeded to the degree of D.D., and became also Divinity Professor and Chancellor of the University. Some of his Divinity Lectures survive in his chief work, 'On the Cause of God (De Causâ Dei) against the Pelagians,' for which the Pope honoured him with the title of the Profound Doctor; and Chaucer,³ when he pictures a tough disputation, takes Bradwardine as one type of the man able to sift it:

"But I ne can not boult it to the bren
 As can the holy doctour Augustin,
 Or Boece, or the Bishop Bradwardin."

Thomas Bradwardine was already Chancellor of his University when he lived as chaplain and friend to Richard de Bury, Bishop of Durham, whose library satisfied the intellectual, and whose influence at court satisfied the material desires of those who associated with him and were found worthy to be his friends. Bradwardine now became Chancellor of the diocese of London, Prebendary of Lincoln—an office that his tender conscience caused him to accept with hesitation—and chaplain and confessor to King Edward III., whom he attended during his wars in France. There the uncouth scholar, whose clumsiness of manner was a jest to the Pope's nephew at Avignon, would address as priest and patriot the English army on the eve of battle. The king annulled the election when Bradwardine was first chosen Archbishop by the monks of Canterbury, saying

¹ "Quicquid nunc scribo Oxoniæ, scriberet pater meus Cicestriæ, quia genuit me scribentem, imo avus et proavus."—'De Causâ Dei,' lib. iii. cap. 22.

² Sir Henry Savile suggests about 1290.

³ Nonnes Preestes Tale.

that he "could ill spare so worthy a man, and never could see that he wished himself to be spared." But within the year the see fell vacant a second time, and then, in the year 1349, Bradwardine was again elected, this time to be consecrated by the Pope at Avignon, and came to England, where he died of the prevailing plague, or Great Mortality, forty days after his consecration, and before he was enthroned.

Besides his maturer work, maintaining professedly the Cause of God against the Pelagians, Bradwardine wrote while at the University on speculative Geometry and Arithmetic, on Proportions of Velocities, and formed a rather thick volume of astronomical tables, showing the equations of the planets and conjunctions and oppositions of luminaries. These arithmetical and mathematical works, except the astronomical tables, have been all printed at Paris.

Thomas Bradwardine's three books 'Upon the Cause of God against Pelagius and upon the Virtue of Causes,' addressed to his fellow collegians at Merton,¹ were received with immediate applause, and copies were obtained for almost all the libraries in Europe. His previous works had represented exclusively his eminence as a mathematician. He was now the first to treat theological questions mathematically by setting out with two hypotheses as principles: 1, that God is supremely perfect and supremely good; 2, that no process is infinite *in entibus*, but in every genus there is one that is first. From these points he deduces corollaries, by demonstration, as nearly as may be, after the manner of Euclid, against all kinds of heresies, with a devout faith not only in the authority of sacred writers, but also of Aristotle's 'Secreta Secretorum,' the 'Vacca' and 'De Vetulâ' ascribed to Plato and Ovid, and Hermes' 'Pomander.' This monument of mediæval mathematical theology, based upon University lectures against the Pelagian heresy, occupies 876

His mathematical works.

His 'De Causâ Dei.'

¹ The work was first printed from collation of six MSS. in 1618, in a handsome folio, by Sir Henry Savile, also of Merton College, at the instance of George Abbot, Archbishop of Canterbury. Bradwardine's name was variously spelt by foreign writers, Bredewardine, Brauardine, Bragwardine, Branduardine, and Brandinkardin. His name is spelt Bradwardine in the Oxford list of Chancellors and Proctors. I follow in the text Sir H. Savile's account of his author.

closely filled pages of a massive folio. The numerous and active favourers of the opinions of Pelagius in Bradwardine's time had said that those opinions could not be confuted by natural and philosophical reasoning. Therefore, says Bradwardine, full of zeal for the cause of God, he thrust his hand knowingly into a terrible flame, content that the Pelagians should bark and bite at him. But in his controversy he desired "to persecute not the person, but the vice; not a man, but an error." So the work treats in its first forty corollaries of forty errors concerning the nature of God. Starting from that error which denies His existence, it shows the immutable God to be the necessary maintainer and mover of all things, whose Will is their great First Cause; that He is ubiquitous, omniscient, and loves his creatures; that His Will is all powerful. His world is complex. God Himself is simple; the "I am." God is, God knows all, God wills all. If God ceased to be, there would be no more past or future, possible or impossible, true or false. The things known are not the cause of Divine Knowledge; but Divine Knowledge is the cause of the things known. So of Divine Will; the Knowledge and Will of God being both immutable. Hence follow arguments of fate and fortune and relation of God's will to sin, and arguments against the doctrine of the Pelagians that man's merits, although not the principal cause of the grace of God, are yet a cause *sine quâ non*. The prepared train of demonstration is also concentrated in support of the then orthodox doctrines concerning repentance and predestination. There ends the first book, and the second and third books deal at length with all known forms of the great question of Free Will and Divine Foreknowledge. It should be added that Bradwardine's mighty treatise includes among its pages that story of the holy man and the good angel who seemed to be of hell, which is also in the 'Gesta Romanorum,' and was told again, long afterwards, by Thomas Parnell in his 'Hermit.'

Among arguments in demonstration of the truth of Christian miracles, Bradwardine¹ points to the evidence of his own time in the cure of the King's Evil by royal Touch, after speaking, imposition of hands, benediction, and the sign of the cross made in the name of Jesus. This, he says, "is done daily and certified

¹ 'De Causâ Dei,' lib. i., cap. i., corol. pars 32.

most surely by the people of England, France, and Germany, and common fame, according to the testimony both of those who have been cured and of those who have been present and have seen. And that it is usual for all Christian kings of England and France to have this divine gift, ancient books and the common report of their kingdoms agree in testifying, whence also the disease has taken the name of Royal"—*Morbus Regius*, King's Evil.

The great representative of physic in this country, who took as much care of the body as Richard de Bury took of the mind of the young prince who became Edward III., sent all his scrofulous patients, who were not to be cured with weasel's blood or pigeon's dung, to ask the king for the royal touch.

This foremost representative of the medical literature and learning of his time was John of Gaddesden, who studied at Merton College, Oxford, and was a Doctor of Physic in the year 1320. Under the name of '*Rosa Anglica*' he wrote a famous compilation of the whole practice of physic, chiefly as derived from the Arabians by himself and by Gilbert Anglicus and other of his predecessors, with additions from his own experience. His *Rose of England* may have been so named with reference to the *Lily of France*, "*Medicinæ Lilium*," by Bernard Gordon, who died in 1305, after having been for twenty years Professor of Medicine in Montpellier. John of Gaddesden's book was considered by Leland to entitle him to be called "the light of his age;" and it was indeed shrewd, as well as learned, according to the light of his age, which prescribed for epilepsy such medicaments as a boar's bladder boiled, misletoe, and a cuckoo. As to the origin of diseases John of Gaddesden had nothing of his own to tell; but his '*Rosa Anglica*' contains an unequalled collection of all the prescriptions and nostrums used by the physicians of his time. He knew how to make money, by satisfying the desires of patients with great show of action and by pleasing them with his professional talk, if we may infer so much from his book, which is sprinkled with scraps of verse, some of them of his own invention, and which often mixes English with its Latin. He, as the old physicians always did, treated of diet and the art of cookery. He taught the ladies how to make perfumes and washes. He contrived select and costly medicines for

the rich, and, when he tells of a medicine that is costly, directs that the rich patient have a double dose of it. He teaches how, in case of palsy, to dress fox-skins against wintry weather. He is etymological, and the name of the enveloping membrane of the bowels, peritoneum, he derives from its relation to the seat of flatulence, as "juxta tonantem." When the prince under his care had small-pox, he says that he prevented pockmarks by causing the patient to be wrapped in scarlet and everything about the bed to be red. This thereafter became one of his rules in treatment of the disease. John of Gaddesden was also bone-setter and oculist. He could draw a rotten tooth; kill lice when his clerical patients (whom he especially names in relation to this part of his practice) were much troubled with them; and he would cut corns. He had secret remedies, not to be divulged to the laity, especially some that were associated with strong waters and brandy; and says that he cannot tell us how much in money and gifts he got for them. He had good money for a recipe of tree-frogs, which he sold to the barber-surgeons.¹

This busy and prosperous medical writer and practitioner was made prebendary of St. Paul's in the (income bearing) stall of Ealdland, and it is recorded of him to his honour that he ousted the foreigners who had enjoyed monopoly of royal favours, and was the first Englishman employed at court as a physician.²

Among the authorities well known to his Doctor of Physic, Chaucer cites both John of Gaddesden and his obscurer predecessor, Gilbert, called Anglicus, who lived probably in the beginning of the reign of Edward I., and compiled his book of medicine from treatises of the Arabians, including entire chapters taken word for word from Rhases. That Doctor of Chaucer's—

" Wel he knew the old Esculapius

* * * *

Averrois, Damascene, and Constantin,
Bernard, and Gatisden, and Gilbertin."

¹ " Pro quo habui bonam pecuniam a Barbitonsoribus."

² ' Freind's History of Physick, from the time of Galen to the beginning of the Sixteenth Century ' (ed. 1727), vol. ii. pp. 277-293. ' Rosa Anglica, Practica Medicine a capite ad pedes ' Joannis Anglici, was first printed in folio at Pavia in 1492, reprinted at Venice in 1506 and 1516, and at Naples in 1508. A later edition, in two volumes folio, was published at Augsburg in 1595.

At the close of the first book of this narrative we saw the complete formation of the language as it was spoken in the time of writers who used English not materially differing from that of our own day. It was the time in which also lived Richard de Bury and his friends; but when I had reached this period the first part of my task was done, and I gave heed only to those of Chaucer's neighbours in our literature who produced books in the mother tongue—Robert of Brunne, Richard of Hampole, Laurence Minot, the author of the 'Vision of Piers Plowman,' and John Barbour—while pressing forward to touch the hem of the robe of Chaucer, in whom first our perfected English lives. Thus we were left standing before Chaucer, yet but half acquainted with his fellow-labourers. For, as our tale is that of the English mind; of English writers, whether or not they were writers in English; we had yet to recognise the English thought written in Latin and sometimes French, with powers that secured repute for it as part of the best literature of this country in Chaucer's time.

And so we pass now from the princely bishop who sought in his own way to restore learning, from his friends the acute theologians, and his old colleague the court doctor, who was the author of the 'Rosa Anglica,' to the French and Latin writing of Chaucer's friend and fellow-poet, Gower, doctor neither of divinity nor physic, but an English gentleman, who, as a man observant of political affairs, cared earnestly about his country.

John Gower survived by eight years his friend and contemporary Geoffrey Chaucer, dying, a blind old man, in the year 1408. The date of the birth of Gower is unknown, but it is assumed that he was born a little Contemporaries of Gower and Chaucer. earlier than 1328, the year to which Chaucer's birth is assigned on the authority of his monument in Westminster Abbey. If he had been born in the same year as Chaucer, and if Chaucer died, as his monument, erected in 1556, says that he did, in the year 1400, at the age of seventy-two, John Gower would still have gone to his grave an old man of eighty. Every year, therefore, of seniority over his contemporary that we ascribe to Gower, adds one to eighty for his age at death; and how many years, if any, we conjecturally add, depends upon an estimate of probability. John Wiclif, too, although he died sixteen years earlier

than Chaucer and twenty-four years earlier than Gower, was a contemporary of like age with these two poets, being only by a few years Chaucer's senior. So that, if Robert (or William?) Langlande was not more than forty years old when he wrote his 'Vision of Piers Plowman'—a work, as we have seen, warm-blooded, vigorous in contest against evils of the world, and active in zeal heavenward—then, within the range of half-a-dozen years ending with that of Chaucer's birth in 1328, we may associate the birth-year of Chaucer with the birth-year of the three greatest of his contemporaries, Langlande, Wiclif, and Gower. Within the same six years also, when Roger Bacon had been from thirty to thirty-six years dead, there was Sir John Mandeville starting upon his travels, Robert of Brunne at Sixhill beginning to rhyme Peter Langtoft's Chronicle in English, and William of Shoreham, in his rural vicarage, producing that translation of the Psalter which was the first book of Holy Scripture rendered into the new form of English.

Of Gower's birthplace and parentage there have been differing accounts. Life of Gower. Caxton, who, in 1483, printed the first edition of his 'Confessio Amantis,' said that John Gower was "a squire born in Wales in the time of Richard II." As Richard II. was not king until 1377, the authority for the period here said to be that of Gower's birth was manifestly but a loose guess and a bad one. When the place of his birth is at the same time said to be Wales, the error arises from two causes. One cause is association of name with that of the peninsula of Gower, in which Henry I. planted his colony of Flemings, and where the people to this day maintain some distinction of race in dress, dialect, and customs, marry among themselves and keep themselves apart from their Welsh neighbours. The other misleading fact is, that before the reign of Richard II., yet actually during the first years of the poet's life, the see of St. David's was held (from 1328 to 1347) by its munificent benefactor Bishop Henry le Gower, the "Menevian Wykeham," who adorned the cathedral throughout with harmonious additions and enrichments, and built the palace, stamping the character of a fresh mind on every graceful detail in the decorated style that was of his own originating. As this most famous of the Bishops of St. David's founded and endowed a hospital at Swansea, he

doubtless was a native of the peninsula. But there is no trace whatever of relationship between this bishop and the poet.

Leland said that John Gower was one of the Gowers of Stittenham, in Yorkshire—an error copied by Bale, Pits, and Holinshed. The Reverend H. J. Todd¹ unsuccessfully attempted to produce documentary evidence in support of this tradition, which connects the poet with the Gower family that has for present head the Duke of Sutherland, who also is Earl Gower. But the arms of the poet differ entirely from those of the Gowers of Stittenham; the poet's will makes no reference to Yorkshire; and it has since been proved, from an examination of the Close Rolls by Sir Harris Nicolas,² who has thrown more light than any one else upon the lives of both Gower and Chaucer, that the poet was a rich man, John Gower, Esquire, of Kent, close kindred to a knight, Sir Robert Gower, who had property in Suffolk and manors in other counties. Sir Robert was interred in the church of Brabourne, a small village about five miles east of Ashford, in Kent, where his effigy was placed, holding a shield with the same bearings as those on the tomb of the poet, argent on a chevron azure, three leopards' faces or; the crest, on a chapeau a gower (that is, a wolf-dog) passant.³

Of Sir Robert Gower written trace remains in deeds executed by him for acquisition and transfer of property. In 1333 (on the 25th of June) the manor of Kentwell, with appurtenances, in Suffolk, was granted by David de Strabolgi, Earl of Athol, to Sir Robert Gower, knight, his heirs and assigns. Six years later it was confirmed to him in fee by the king. Ten years later, in 1349, Sir Robert Gower being dead, it was granted to Katherine Countess of Athol, until Sir Robert's heir became of age, the Countess paying twenty marks a year. The heir, then not of age, was Sir Robert Gower's daughter Katherine. John Gower

¹ 'Illustrations of the Lives and Writings of Gower and Chaucer. Collected from authentick documents by the Rev. Henry J. Todd, M.A., F.S.A. London, 1810.' Dedicated to the Most Noble George Granville Leveson Gower, Marquis of Stafford, K.G., &c. &c., as "the friend of literature, and the head of the illustrious house of Gower."

² In the 'Retrospective Review' (for 1828), N. S., vol. ii. pp. 103-17.

³ The arms of the Yorkshire Gowers are barry, argent, and gules, a cross patee flore, sable; and their crest, a wolf passant, argent, collared, and chained, or.

may have been his younger brother, or his brother's son. As he is styled in his own will Esquire, and was so described also on the ledge of his tomb, John Gower was not a knight. Well-born he must have been, for he used coat-armour at a time when such matters were looked to. Leland made Gower a lawyer;¹ others, equally without ground, made him a judge.² Certainly he was well educated, whether at universities or otherwise, and wrote with ease and refinement in French, Latin, and English. It will presently appear that he had really some connexion with the church.

Sir Robert Gower left two daughters, Katherine and Joan. Katherine died in 1366, owning lands at Radwater, in Essex, and half the manor of Kentwell, with Kentwell Hall. Her heir was Joan, who had been a child of six when her father died, and was then twenty-three years old, the wife of William Neve, of Wyting. There remains a special pardon, dated in December of that year, granted to William Neve and Joanna his wife, for entering on Kentwell at the sister's decease without process in the king's court, or performance of homage. The lands had been, therefore, seized, and were restored on payment of a hundred shillings fine. Neve soon died, and within two years Joanna was married again; for in June, 1368, Thomas Syward, pewterer and citizen, with his wife Joan, daughter of Sir Robert Gower, were granting to John Gower, that is to say, to Gower the poet, the manor of Kentwell, with its appurtenances.

In 1365 John Gower was a feoffee of the Kentish manor of Aldington—that parish of ours which has had Erasmus on its list of rectors—and Gower had a grant also of a rental of ten pounds out of the manor of Wigborough, in Essex. In 1369 John Gower acquired for two hundred marks silver from John and Joan Spenythorn their rights in the manor of Kentwell, except a rent of ten pounds. The John Gower who transacts this business and uses the same arms that were placed upon the poet's tomb, corresponds too nearly with the poet in age to have been his father. Having the same Christian name, he could not have been his

¹ "Coluit forum et patrias leges lucri causa." *Comment. de Script. Brit.*, p. 414.

² Mr. Foss (*Judges of England*, vol. iv. p. 28) finds in the fourteenth century no judge named Gower.

brother, and had he been a first-cousin there would probably have been some difference in the armorial bearings. But the identification of this Gower with the poet is yet more complete. In September, 1373, a deed was executed by John Gower, at Otford, in Kent,¹ signed with his arms and crest, appointing feoffees of his manor of Kentwell, in Suffolk, fifteen miles distant from another manor of his, which is among those named in his will. One of the feoffees appointed was Sir John Cobham,² who was of Hever, in Kent. Sir John Cobham named in his own will another Kentish neighbour and friend, Sir Arnold Savage, as executor. Sir John Cobham's nephew Reginald married Sir Arnold Savage's daughter Isabel. The same Sir Arnold Savage signed his name as a witness to the will of their other neighbour and friend, John Gower, the poet. Gower's home in Kent, in that year 1373, seems, then, to have been on the banks of the Darent, by the pleasant hills at Otford, where the valley of the river opens on the meadows and thick woodlands of South-western Kent, and where in the poet's time the Archbishops of Canterbury had an old favourite seat, which, it is said, had wanted only a good well till Thomas a Becket struck the ground with his staff, and so gave rise to the clear spring which is called St. Thomas's Well until this day.

In February, 1381, Isabella, daughter of Walter de Huntingfield, remitted her right in lands of the parishes of Throwley and Stalesfield, both in Kent, to John Gower and John Bowland, clerk. Another deed shows that in 1382 "John Gower, Esquire, of Kent," acquired legal possession of the manors of Feltwell in Norfolk, and Moulton in Suffolk. Here the identification of the Kentish Gower is complete, as that manor of Moulton was devised to his wife by John Gower, the poet, in his will. In June, 1385, Isabella Huntingfield, "of the county of Kent," remitted to John Gower, "of the same county," for herself and her heirs, all actions,

¹ Otteford. Sir Harris Nicolas supposed—or, more probably, a misprint of *r* for *t* made him appear to suppose—this place to be Orford (in Suffolk). It is obviously Otford, in Kent. Dr. Pauli only repeats from Sir H. Nicolas.

² Besides Sir John Cobham, the other feoffees were the Rector of Tunstal, a Kentish parish; Roger of Ashburnham, in Sussex, not very far over the Kentish border; Thomas de Brockhill, probably of Brockley, in Kent; and William Weston, it is not told of what place.

plaints, and demands that may have arisen between them from the beginning of the world up to that day. For these clear indications of John Gower's home and worldly position we are indebted to his prudent care in having all leases and releases to which he was a party entered on the rolls of Chancery.

In 1393-4 Henry of Lancaster presented a collar to John Gower, in acknowledgment, perhaps, of pleasure taken in his English poem then completed. At a later date he must have received the collar of SS with the appendage of a small swan chained, which is about the neck of the effigy upon his tomb; for it was not until the year 1397, after the death of Thomas of Woodstock, Duke of Gloucester, that Henry of Lancaster assumed the swan as his badge.

It was also in the year 1397 that John Gower, who with infirm health had reached his seventieth year, took a wife. There is no evidence of any previous marriage, and he mentions no child in his will. But his will provides for his widow, and does not dispose of all his property, Kentwell being among the possessions that he does not mention. The undivided estate would go, without act of bequest, to the next heir, who might be a son or daughter. A Thomas Gower, of Clapham, staunch Lancastrian, who fell at the battle of Tewkesbury in 1471, had some property in Southwark, where the poet lived in his last years, and it is just possible that he may have been John Gower's grandson or great-grandson. But it is only known, through an extract from the registry of William of Wykeham, preserved at Winchester, that by a licence dated the 25th of January, 1397, John Gower was married to Agnes Groundolf by the chaplain of their parish church of St. Mary Magdalene, Southwark, not in the parish church itself, but in a chapel of Gower's own, under his quarters in the priory of St. Mary Overies.¹

St. Mary Overies, *i. e.* St. Mary-Over-the River, was a religious house said to have originated in a priory of nuns, founded by a Mary who there owned a ferry before London Bridge was built, and to have been endowed by her with the profits of the ferry.

¹ . . . Extra ecclesiam parochialem, in oratorio ipsius Joannis Gower infra hospicium cum in prioratu B. Mariæ de Overee in Suthwerk prædicta situatum, solempnizare valeas . . .

If so, it was re-founded in 1106 as a Priory for Canons Regular. In the year 1207 the original priory was burnt down, and when it was rebuilt there was added by Peter de Rupibus, Bishop of Winchester, a spacious chapel where the parish church now stands. The priory was again rebuilt in the reigns of Richard II. and Henry IV. The masons were still at their work when John Gower, who was the most liberal contributor towards the cost of rebuilding, established lodgings and a chapel of his own in the new priory, and spent his last years peacefully among its clergy within shadow of the church of which he was an honoured benefactor. He lived there as a clerk among clerks, for I find in the list of rectors of the parish of Great Braxted, in Essex, that John Gower, described not as priest but as clerk, obtained that living (which is now worth 552*l.* a year, with residence and sixty-five acres of glebe land) by the gift of Richard II. in February, 1390, and resigned it in March, 1397, that is to say, upon his marriage.¹ This fact has not hitherto been observed in connexion with the poet's life; but that John Gower, clerk, who by the king's gift held the living of Braxted Magna from the year 1390 till his marriage, could have been nobody but the poet, is confirmed, if there be need of confirmation, by the fact that Braxted parish is little more than a mile distant from the parish of Wigborough, out of the manor of which we have seen that John Gower the poet had a grant of ten pounds from the rental.² He is thus known to have owned property in the immediate neighbourhood of Great Braxted before he was made rector of that parish. He was not in priest's orders, and in the '*Confessio Amantis*,' calls himself a "borel clerk;" but his holding of the living as a "clerk," and subsequent marrying into a home among the clergy of St.

¹ Newcourt's '*Repertorium Ecclesiasticum Parochiale Londinense*,' 1710, vol. ii. p. 91, where the name is given without note or comment in the list of the rectors of Braxted Magna.

² In 39 Edw. III., 1365, granted from the manor of Wygebergh by William, son of William Septuanus, knight, to John Gower and his heirs, with release at the same time by a second instrument of the manor of Aldyngton in Kent, with the rent of 14*s.* 6*d.*, and of one cock, thirteen hens, and forty eggs, out of Maplescomb. Rot. Claus. 39 Edw. III., quoted by Sir Harris Nicolas, who left his readers to find out that there is now no Wygebergh in Essex, that being the old spelling of Wigborough.

Mary Overies,¹ show that the wealthy poet lived in closer personal relation to the church than has been hitherto supposed.

Three years after his marriage Gower became blind and ceased to write. In his poem 'De Pacis Commendatione,' in praise of King Henry IV., Gower says that it was in the first year of Henry's reign that he became blind,² and in MSS. of the 'Vox Clamantis' he writes that in the second year of Henry IV.'s reign, because he was blind, he ceased to write.³ Henry was crowned in October 1399; and 1400 might be called either the first or second year of his reign. From that date, therefore, for the next eight years, the infirm poet spent the evening of his life at St. Mary Overies in retirement from all worldly affairs except pious and liberal support of the advancing building-works in the priory, and in the church now known as St. Saviour's,⁴ to which he bequeathed his body. His will, made not long before death, bequeathed his soul to God, his body to be buried in St. Mary Overies. The poet bequeathed also 13s. 4d. to each of the four parish churches of Southwark for ornaments and lights, besides 6s. 8d. for prayers to each of their curates. It is not less characteristic that he left also 40s. for prayers to the master of St. Thomas's Hospital, and, still for prayers, 6s. 8d. to each of its priests, 3s. 4d. to each sister in the hospital, twenty pence to each nurse of the infirm there, and to each of the infirm twelve pence. There were similar bequests to St. Thomas Elsing Spital, a priory and hospital that stood where now stands Sion College.

¹ Sir Harris Nicolas, although the licence he cites is for a marriage, as stated, outside the parish church, has read it by oversight into evidence of a marriage in the parish church itself; and Dr. Pauli, who, in the biographical sketch prefixed to his edition of the 'Confessio Amantis,' repeats the information given by Sir Harris Nicolas without further digestion, copies the mistake, thereby also missing the evidence it supplies (when read in connexion with the poet's will) that Gower's "hospitium" was in the Priory during the last eleven years of his life.

² "Henrici quarti primus regni fuit annus
Quo mihi defecit visus ad acta mea."

³ "Henrici regis annus fuit ille secundus,
Scribere dum cesso, sum quia cecus ego."

⁴ After the dissolution of the priory the church of St. Mary Overies was bought of the king by the inhabitants of Southwark as a parish church, and, by Act of Parliament, united with that of St. Margaret's-of-the-Hill under its present name of St. Saviour's.

St. Thomas Elsing Spital, founded in 1329 by William Elsing, was especially commended to the sympathies of the blind old poet, as it consisted of a college for a warden, four priests, and two clerks, who had care of one hundred old, blind, and poor persons of both sexes, preference being given to blind, paralytic, and disabled priests. Like legacies were bequeathed also to Bedlam, without Bishopsgate, and to St. Mary's Hospital, Westminster. Also there were bequests of ten shillings to each of the leper-houses. Two robes, one white silk, the other of blue baudkin, a costly stuff with web of gold and woof of silk, also a new dish and chalice and a new missal, were bequeathed to the perpetual service of the altar of the chapel of St. John the Baptist, in which his body was to be buried. To the prior and convent he left a great book, a Martyrology, which had been composed and written for them at his expense. To his wife Agnes he left a hundred pounds, three cups, one coverlet, two salt-cellars, and a dozen silver spoons; also all his beds and chests, with the furnishings of hall, pantry, and kitchen; also a chalice and robe for the altar of the chapel of their house; and she was to have, for life, all rents due to him from his manors of Southwell in Nottingham, and Moulton in Suffolk. His wife Agnes, and four friends, two of them lay, two of them clerical, were appointed John Gower's executors: the four being Sir Arnold Savage (who was of Kent); Roger, an esquire; William Denne, canon of the King's Chapel (the Dennes also were of Kent); and John Burton, clerk. The will was signed at the priory of St. Mary Overies, in Southwark, on the Feast of the Assumption (August 15), in the year 1408, and the testator died so soon afterwards that on the 24th of October in the same year the will was proved; and administration of the property not specified therein was granted on the 7th of November.

Gower seems to have spent his last days in the Priory, and to have died surrounded by its clergy. Leland is right in saying that they honoured in the poet one who had contributed most liberally towards the cost of the recent rebuilding of their church. That he was a great benefactor of theirs an inscription on his monument attested. They buried him where he desired to lie in this church, and a handsome monument of carved stone was erected by them to his honour in the north aisle of the

nave. Within the three arches of its canopy were painted Charity, Mercy, and Pity: Charity holding the device—

“ En toy qui est filz de Dieu le pere
Sauve soit que gist souz cest pierre ”

[In thee, which art of God the Fader sone,
Sauved be he that lith under this stone];

Mercy holding the device—

“ O bon Jesu fait ta Mercie
A lalme dont le corpe gist icy ”

[O gode Jesu, thy mercy clere
The soule whose body is liggende here];

and Pity holding the device—

“ Pour ta Pite Jesu regarde
Et met cest alme en sauve garde ”

[For thy Pite, Jesu, see,
And may this soule be sauf in thee].

Seven niches were carved in front of the altar-tomb, on the top of which the poet's effigy was placed. The head of the portrait image rested on three volumes, inscribed with the titles of his three chief works: ‘*Speculum Meditantis*’ (which he had written in French), ‘*Vox Clamantis*’ (which he had written in Latin), and ‘*Confessio Amantis*’ (which he had written in English). Long auburn hair was represented falling in a large curl on the shoulders, and crowned with a chaplet of four roses, originally intermixed with ivy, “in token,” says his editor, Berthollet, “that he in his life daies flourished fresshely in literature and science.” He was shown, with a small forked beard, wearing, from neck to feet, a long robe of purple (Speght says greenish) damask, buttoned down the front, and round his neck was carved a collar of SS., from which hung a small swan chained, the badge of Henry IV. The poet's feet were represented resting on a lion, and above, within a panel of the side of the canopy, was a shield charged with his arms.

Under the figure of Mercy these leonine verses were inscribed:

“ Armigeri scutum nihil a modo fert tibi tutum;
Reddidit immolatum morti generale tributum; ”

Spiritus exutum se gaudeat esse solutum ;
Est ubi virtutum regnum sine labe statutum."

Which are to this effect :

"No squire's shield defending will guard you from this way of ending ;
He has paid the unbending Death's tax over all men impending ;
Glad be the soul's wending, no more with the flesh interblending,
'Tis where, God amending, the Virtues reign free from offending."

On the ledge of the tomb was inscribed, "Hic jacet J. Gower, arm. Angl. poeta celeberrimus ac huic sacro edificio benefac. insignis. Vixit temporibus Ed. III. et Ric. II." "Here lies J. Gower, Esq., a most celebrated English Poet, and to this sacred building a distinguished benefactor. He lived in the times of Ed. III. and Ric. II." Near to this monument was hung a table, granting 1500 days of pardon to all those who devoutly prayed for Gower's soul ; and, according to a MS. of Nicholas Charles, Lancaster Herald, the arms of Gower were also placed in the highest south window of the body of the church, near the roof. The ancient church, in which others of our great writers afterwards were laid to rest, has been much meddled with since Gower's time. The nave was replaced by a poor substitute in 1840. The poet's tomb was restored in 1832, by the first Duke of Sutherland, who flattered himself that he was paying honour to an ancestor.

Besides the three works, in three languages, represented on his tomb as pillowing the head that gave them birth, there were among John Gower's writings some French "Balades," which remain to us in a copy of them made for presentation to King Henry IV.

Gower's
Balades.

Gower's Ballads are in a thin oblong MS. on vellum, containing poems in Latin, French, and English. It belonged to Henry VII. when Earl of Richmond, as his signature on a blank leaf at the beginning of the MS. attests ; and in 1656 it was presented by Lord Fairfax, Cromwell's general, to Sir Thomas Gower, inscribed by him "Sir John Gower's learned Poems, the same book by himself presented to King" (Edward crossed out, and written over) "Henry y^e fourth *att* his Coronation ;" "or before" was inserted over "att," and, the "att" and the "or" being then crossed out, "before his Coronation" was what stood. "For my honorable friend and kinsman Sr. Thomas Gower,

Knt. and Baronett, from T. Fairfax, 1656." The title of the Ballads, and a part of the first of them, also a leaf containing part of a French poem addressed to Henry IV., have been mutilated; a page also is wanting between the short Latin poems which follow the Ballads, and a French poem on Marriage, which is, therefore, imperfect at the beginning. The MS. begins with an English panegyric in stanzas, having a Latin prologue in seven hexameters, on King Henry IV. This Song of the Commendation of Peace, in praise of Henry IV., was printed in Urry's edition of the works of Chaucer. Then follows a Latin poem in elegiacs, described as "a letter, in which the said John Gower prays devoutly to the Most High for the health and well-being of his said lord." But if the prayer be to the Most High, the address is in flattery and blessing to the earthly king: "O pie Rex, Christum per te laudamus et ipsum;" O pious king, we praise even Christ himself through you. Then follows a ballad to the king from the poet, who addresses him as—

"Vostre oratour et vostre humble vassal
Vostre Gower qest trestout vos soubgitz,"

in which the burden is that he has the advantage who puts trust in God: "Qen Dieu se fie il ad bel avantage," which formally introduces a small piece of complex Latin rhyme, praying the king for righteous rule, and that God may preserve him from all evil men; that Latin rhyme being presented as a fuller embodiment of the thought contained in the refrain of the ballad. Then follow some mutilated and incomplete lines of French verse, among which is to be distinguished part of the prelude to the fifty ballads in which Gower offers to the king—in whom alone, next to God, he takes comfort when in grief—to make ballads to entertain his noble Court. And it will be especial joy to him if they please his majesty.¹

The "balades," to whose class these pieces belong, were one form of the artificial poetry into which language was musically tortured

¹ "Por desporter vo noble Courte
Jeo frai balade et sil a vous plerro
Entre toutz autres joie men serroit
Car en vous soul apres le Dieu aie
Gist mon confort sascun me grieveroit
Li Rois du ciel monseigneur vous mercie."

by the courtly poets of Provence, and courtiers elsewhere, who strained to exhibit more or less skill in an accomplishment that was regarded as a fit one for a well-trained gentleman. The soul spoke through their skilful work as seldom as the fire of our English youth now glows through the Latin verse made in accordance with the formulas of Eton. Provençal pieces were called "vers," till Gerant de Borneil, at the be-
Provençal and Italian rhyming.
 ginning of the thirteenth century, is said to have first called them canzo and canzos (chanson); for theirs was, like that of the Greek odes, poetry made to be sung. The Provençals meant by a sonnet, a song with an instrumental
Sonnet.
 accompaniment. The Italian sonnet, first established by Peter de Vineia, resembled this only in name; differing by its fixed number of lines, and the peculiar interlacement of the rhyming. If a recurring rhyme be signified by a recurring letter, the interlacement of the sonnet's two quatrains and two tercets would be in this wise: a b b a | a b b a | c d d | d a c; or in the tercets: c d e | c d e; or, a b a b | a b a b | c d c | c d c; or there was some other such interlacement of the fourteen lines, in which there must not be more than four or five different rhymes. But the Italian sonnet was by no means the most complex of these contrivances. Thus the sextine, invented by Armand Daniel, sets out with a strophe of six lines,
Sixtines.
 none of them rhyming, and then rings the changes, not on rhymes to them, but on actual repetition in succeeding strophes of the same, and never any other, final words, with artful variation, in this fashion, of the order of their recurrence in successive stanzas:

a	b	c	d	e	f
f	a	e	b	d	c
c	f	d	a	b	e
e	c	b	f	a	d
d	e	a	c	f	b

These words are shuffled carefully so as to recur upon a principle of fixed irregularity. The sixth and last of the end-words in one stanza is first of the next; then what was the first is second; what was next to the last is third, and what was next to the first fourth; what was next to the next to the last is fifth, and what was next to the next to the first sixth; and so on con-

tinually. Petrarch wrote sixtines, and examples of this kind of ingenuity may be studied in his 37th Canzone ('Non ha tanti animali'), the 38th ('La ver l'aurora'), or the 46th ('Mia benigna fortuna').

Of the Provençal Balade we may see the construction illustrated in these poems of Gower's. The first five are
Balade.
said¹ to have been made especially for those "who look for the issue of their loves in honest marriage;" the rest, to the close of the book, "are universal to all the world, according to the properties and conditions of lovers who are diversely experienced in the fortune of love." They are in each case (except that the ninth has five stanzas, and the thirty-second has its quatrain omitted by the copyist) formed of three stanzas of seven or eight—usually seven—lines and a final quatrain. The last syllables of the two first lines of each balade are to be rhymed with throughout the whole poem, except in the refrain or balade line that should close every stanza. That last line, or refrain, usually has a distinct rhyming sound, and one of the two next preceding lines rhymes with it. In eight of Gower's ballads² even the refrain follows one of the dominant pair of rhymes. Four pieces,³ which otherwise agree with the rest in form, have no refrain. Gower's ninth ballad, which is of five stanzas, closes with the refrain of the first stanza, and has in its third and fourth stanzas the shadow of another. In one ballad, the eighth, the refrain takes only those words of the last line which follow the cæsura.

These technical details mean, in fact, that a balade is such a poem as I now quote from among those written by Gower, adding a close English translation imitative of its manner:

"Livern s'en vait et lesteé vient flori
 De froid en chald le temps se muera
 Loisel gaincois avoit perdu son ny
 Le renouvelle v qils ses joiera
 De mes amours ensi le monde va
 Par tiel espoir je me conforte ades
 Et vous ma dame croietz bien cela
 Quant dolour vait les joies vienont pres.

¹ In a note following the fifth.

² The 9th, 13th, 18th, 22nd, 24th, 36th, 39th, and 45th.

³ The 13th, 14th, 16th, and 17th.

Ma douce dame ensi come jeo vous di
 Saver poetz coment mon coer esta
 Le quel vous serve et long temps ad servi
 Tant come jeo vive et toutditz servira.
 Remembretz vous ma dame pour cela
 Qa mon voloir ne vous lerrai james
 Ensi come dieus le voet ensi serra
 Quant dolour vait les joies viennent pres.

Le jour qe jai de vous nouvelle oi
 Il mest avis qe rien me grievera
 Porceo ma chiere dame jeo vous pri
 Par vo message quant il vous plerra
 Mandetz a moi que bon vous semblera
 Du quoi mon coer se poet tenir en pes
 Et pensetz dame de ceo qai dit pieca
 Quant dolour vait les joies viennent pres.

O noble dame a vous ce lettre irra
 Et quant dieu plect jeo vous verrai apres
 Par cest escrit il vous remembrera
 Quant dolour vait les joies viennent pres."

Which may be thus rendered into English :

" Winter departs, and comes the flowery May,
 And round from cold to heat the seasons fly ;
 The bird that to its nest had lost the way,
 Rebuilds it that he may rejoice thereby.
 Like change in my love's world I now descry,
 With such a hope I comfort myself here,
 And you, my lady, on this truth rely :
 When grief departs the coming joys are near.

My lady sweet, by that which now I say
 You may discover how my heart leaps high,
 That serves you and has served for many a day,
 As it will serve you daily till I die.
 Remember, then, my lady, knowing why,
 That my desire for you will never veer.
 As God wills that it be, so be our tie :
 When grief departs the coming joys are near.

The day that news of you came where I lay,
 It seem'd there was no grief could make me sigh ;
 Wherefore of you, dear lady mine, I pray
 By your own message,—when you will, not I,—
 Send me what you think best as a reply
 Wherewith my heart can keep itself from fear ;
 And, lady, search the reason of my cry,
 When grief departs the coming joys are near.

O noble dame, to you this note shall hie,
 And when God wills I follow to my dear.
 This writing speaks, and says, till I am by,
 When grief departs the coming joys are near."

John Gower's Balades in this MS. are followed by two short Latin poems, in elegiacs; a French poem, incomplete, on the excellence of marriage, with examples (this poem being found also added to some MSS. of the 'Confessio Amantis'); and the collection closes with the Latin lines in which Gower told of his blindness. The Balades exist only in the Stafford MS., which was described by the Reverend Henry John Todd in his *Illustrations of Gower and Chaucer*, and by Thomas Warton in an Appendix to the second edition of his 'History of English Poetry.' The contents of this MS., omitting the already familiar Latin poem 'De Pacis Commendatione' in praise of Henry IV., were first printed, by Earl Gower, for the Roxburghe Club in 1818.¹

Gower's Balades are commonly considered to have been written by him in his youth, that inference being drawn rather from their topic than from any direct evidence. It is inferred rather against evidence, for Gower, who was more than seventy years old at the accession of Henry IV., offered to make balades for the amusement of King Henry's courtiers. Love was then technically regarded as chief subject of the exercises of a courtly poet, who was to discourse ingeniously according to rules of his art of "properties and conditions of lovers who are diversely experienced in the fortune of love." A gentle troubadour might be, like Emperor Henry VI., a man who hanged, tortured, burnt, buried alive, and gouged out eyes, and dealt infamously with women. This temper did not affect his skill in the art of amatory versifying. For we must not lose sight of the marked distinction in the early literature of modern Europe between the idleness of a court poetry that seeks amusement in the graceful and ingenious adornment of a conventional theme after conventional fashions, and the earnestness of a national poetry that labours to enforce a true deep sense of living interests, according to men's perception of the light towards which souls that God has made grow naturally as His plants towards the sun.

¹ 'Balades and other Poems.' By John Gower. Printed from the original manuscript in the library of the Marquis of Stafford, at Trentham. London, 1818.

CHAPTER III.

JOHN GOWER was not only a court poet, he was also an Englishman of genius resolved to make the best use of his powers. That spirit which put into the first note of English song the heart of English literature,—“For us it is very right that we praise with our words, love in our minds, the Keeper of the Heavens, Glory King of Hosts. He is the source of power,”¹—that recognition of God, shown actively in the desire to make the crooked straight and the rough places plain,—has been the strength of England and of the great Writers by whom the mind of England is expressed. Ours is not technically a religious literature. It is not crying constantly Lord, Lord; but it does represent constant endeavour to get at the right, and do it. No human despot ever stayed its war against injustice. The descendants of those forefathers who were represented by a Cædmon, a Bede, and an Alfred, have never for one generation ceased to labour for the useful and the true; to cry out boldly and earnestly against all real or apparent wrong; and practically to uphold the doing of his duty by each man according to his place in life as the chief earthly good. We have seen this throughout the literature before Chaucer. In Chaucer’s time we find it everywhere. It is in the vigorous detail of social evils in the ‘Vision of Piers Plowman;’ that is to say, the Vision of Christ; with its last thought directed heavenward and its last hope for the world built upon a search for Christ. It is in the labours of Wiclif and his followers, especially in their translation of the Bible into the familiar English speech. It is in Mandeville’s Travels—designed as a guide of pilgrims to the Holy Land. It is in the Hermit of Hampole’s ‘Pricke of Conscience,’ and in John Barbour’s strain

¹ See Book I. ch. vii.

of liberty. Richard de Bury, loving books, attacks every misuse of them, and secures for his precious library the utmost usefulness, if possible, for ever. His friends Holcot and Bradwardine, to the best of their skill, bring their study of exact sciences into the service of what they believe in their souls to be the truth of God. And Gower is as genuine an Englishman.

Whenever there is a generation in this country cast on times that especially call forth the patriotic feeling and the independent energies of the best men, without taking away from them the leisure for deliberate expression of their minds, we have our writers busiest and best, because then most intent on true and exact utterance of what they strongly feel. The French wars of Edward III., accompanied by the domestic ills that raised vigorous protest in Richard II.'s reign, produced in England a great period of literature, with at its head Chaucer and Gower, men whose powers of expression had been strengthened by the recent influence of the Italian literary patriarchs upon the mind of Europe.

A contemporary copyist describes the chief works of Gower in a short sketch contained in some MSS.,¹ and printed in Caxton's edition of his English poem. There are two forms of the sketch with variations caused by political changes. These sketches are usually ascribed to Gower himself; but the Latin is too bad to be his, and their style that of some friendly contemporary editor, a religious man who is not clever at description. Thus he writes:

"Because each man is bound to impart to others as he has received of God, John Gower, desiring while he has time somewhat to lighten the account of his stewardship over those things which God gave to him intellectually, has therefore, between his labours and rest, addressed to the knowledge of others three books, for the sake of instruction, in the manner following:

"The first book, put forth in the French language, is divided into twelve parts, and, treating of the Vices and the Virtues, and of the various degrees of this age, seeks to teach, by a right path, the way whereby a transgressed sinner ought to return to the knowledge of his Creator. The title of that book is called 'Speculum Hominis' [Speculum Meditantis], the 'Mirror of Man' [the Mirror of one Meditating].

"But the second book, composed [metrically] in the Latin tongue [in verses of hexameter], treats—one description says—on that marvellous event which happened in England in the time of King Richard the Second, in the fourth year of his reign, when the servile rustics rose impe-

¹ MS. Harl. 3869.

tuously against the nobles and gentles of the kingdom, pronouncing, however, the innocence of the said lord the king, then under age, his case therefore excusable. He declares the faults to be more evidently from other sources by which and not by chance such strange things happen among men. And the title of this volume, the order of which contains seven sections, is called 'Vox Clamantis : ' the Voice of one Crying."

The later description of this book, varied probably by the hand of a different transcriber, says that it treats—

"Of the various misfortunes happening in England in the time of King Richard the Second, whereby not only the nobles and commons of the kingdom suffered torments, but also the most cruel king himself, through his demerits falling in ruins from on high, is cast finally into the pitfall that he made. And the name of this volume is entitled 'Vox Clamantis.'"

The first of these descriptions is in a faint way true to the substance of the book. The second, written after the accession of Henry IV., expresses an opinion based on ^{Confessio} ^{Amantis.} the course of events after the date of the 'Vox Clamantis.' Of Gower's third book the descriptions are :

"That third book in the English language, divided into eight parts, which at the instance of the most serene prince, the said Lord Richard the Second King of England, is composed [that third book which for reverence of his most vigorous Lord Henry of Lancaster, then Earl of Derby, is composed in English] according to the prophecy of Daniel on the mutation of the kingdoms of this world, distinguishes the times from the time of King Nebuchadnezzar until now. It treats also according to [Nectanabus and] Aristotle upon those things in which King Alexander, as well in the regulation of himself as otherwise, was thoroughly instructed by his teaching. But in the principal matter of this work it has its foundation upon love, and the infatuate passion of lovers. And the appropriate name specially allotted to it is 'Confessio Amantis : ' the Confession of a Lover."

So runs the later description ; the earlier had said that it treats of things in which, by Nectanabus and Aristotle, King Alexander,

"As well in the regulation of himself as otherwise, had for foundation love and the conditions of lovers, where are inserted more distinctly for example the end of various chronicles and histories, and also the writings of poets and philosophers. And the name of the present work is specially called 'Confessio Amantis.'"

Of the French poem no MS. is known to be extant ;¹ the Latin

¹ What Thomas Warton, in his 'History of English Poetry,' mistook for the 'Speculum Meditantis,' is a book enforcing by examples from mythology and history fidelity in married lovers.

poem is Gower's best work, and the English that for which he is most generally known.

The 'Vox Clamantis,' really the voice of one crying in the social wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, was written immediately after the insurrection of the Commons under Wat Tyler and Jack Straw in 1381. Treating that event as sign of disease in the body politic, it sought for the causes of disease through the whole framework of society. Far wider in the scope of its complaint against corruptions of society than Richard de Bury's 'Philobiblon,' the 'Vox Clamantis' is supported by that work, as well as by the 'Vision of Piers Plowman,' in giving a lively picture of the condition of society in Chaucer's time. And the truths told in such works are the best preparation for right reading of the 'Canterbury Tales.'

Edward III. had battled with the French, Laurence Minot singing of Crécy and of other triumphs—as over Calais reduced to famine by siege of a plague-smitten army—but dying or ceasing to sing four years before the battle of Poitiers. The French wars, in compelling the king to call his parliament together at least once a year and get supplies by granting or promising reforms, had indirectly served to advance the liberties of England. In 1362 parliament had been first opened by a speech in English. In 1376 a parliament, called "the good," had questioned the faithfulness of ministers who required of the people such "infinite treasure," and had expelled and imprisoned some of the adherents of the unpopular John of Gaunt (Ghent), Duke of Lancaster, who was the king's chief minister. It had rebuked also the king's favourite Alice Perrers. But in June of that year the death of the Black Prince had deprived England of a popular heir to the throne, and the king's grandson, the Black Prince's second son, Richard of Bordeaux, his elder brother being dead, had then become next heir. The Duke of Lancaster, as next heir male, had vainly proposed that the succession should be limited to heirs male of the king; but on the dissolution of that parliament, John of Gaunt, recovering power, had imprisoned its late speaker, and prosecuted the chancellor, William of Wykeham, Bishop of Winchester. It was just then that John of Gaunt escorted to St. Paul's John Wiclif, arraigned as a heretic, and in the eyes of the people confounded the cause of

the reformer with his own.¹ At last, after a reign of fifty years, Edward III. had died at Shene, where he was lodged with Alice Perrers, and in the year 1377 the old king's grandson Richard, a boy only eleven years old, loved of the people for his father's sake, had become King Richard II.

The child-king was furnished with a Council of Regency for the administration of affairs—the Council consisting of the chancellor and treasurer, two bishops, two earls, two barons, two bannerets, and four knights. The boy came to a troubled throne at a time of domestic suffering, when also French and Spaniards so harassed the English coasts that they destroyed the town of Rye, burned Hastings, Poole, Portsmouth, and other places, ravaged the Isle of Wight, and intercepted trading vessels. The king's first parliament, called to obtain supplies, was mainly the "good parliament" again, with the same speaker whom John of Gaunt had imprisoned. But Lancaster warmly represented to it the needs of the country, and it voted liberal supplies, which it placed in charge of two merchants of London, who were appointed treasurers. By aid of these supplies John of Gaunt took on bootless errand a fine army to Brittany, and brought it back after he had failed to take St. Malo. The Scots then broke truce and also became active enemies. The government, having spent its supplies, was 160,000*l.* in debt, and parliament resolved to raise two-thirds of that amount by a poll-tax of three groats upon each person above fifteen years of age. It was the second poll-tax within five years, and the physical distresses of the half-enslaved people were such that within not many months they were about to be devastated by another year of plague. But they still kept their discontent within bounds till government, dissatisfied with the returns, farmed the tax to some speculators. The collectors then became more insolent, and in May, 1381, in Gower's own county of Kent, and in Essex, where also he had property, the rising began. The people of Fobbing, on the Essex side of the Thames, who were the first to rise, killed the assessors and taxing-clerks, and paraded their heads upon poles. Immediately afterwards there was uproar in Kent. In Dartford an insolent collector was brained by Wat Tyler with his lathing-

¹ See Book I. ch. xxiv.

staff, and the people rose. Rochester Castle was besieged, to free from it a burgher of Gravesend who had been claimed as a serf. Every man known to be a lawyer, courtier, or retainer of the Duke of Lancaster, was killed, and a disorderly multitude of a hundred thousand men, swarming after and towards their Kentish leader Wat Tyler, the excommunicated priest John Ball, and Jack Straw the priest of the Essex men, threatened London from Blackheath, demanding that all should be free, that land should never be rented at more than fourpence an acre (then a fair average rent), liberty of buying and selling in all places, and a general pardon. The kindly practice of emancipation had increased the number of poor freemen, who could thrive a little by trading, could assert their independence as hired servants, or even buy land among the shoeless rustics, to whose class they had belonged. But from those who were yet servile bondsmen unpaid labour was demanded in the tillage of their lords' lands, the reaping, housing, thrashing of his corn, and cutting of his wood for fuel. Ignorant and hungry, but yet a mob of Englishmen, the suffering crowd rose, and in the excess of riot most of them asked no more than their personal liberty and right of unimpeded trade, adding only an error of political economy touching the price of land which has in some form been shared with them even by educated statesmen of a later day. In Southwark, on the night of the 12th of June, they destroyed the Marshalsea and sacked the Archbishop of Canterbury's palace; next morning they poured over London Bridge, destroyed Newgate, sacked the stronghold of the lawyers in the Temple, and laid waste the Duke of Lancaster's rich palace of the Savoy; wasters not robbers, they burnt alive in it one who was found taking to himself some of its gold and silver. The king and the chief nobles had during this time of irrepressible riot fled for refuge to the Tower. On the 14th of June the king met the insurgents at Mile End, and acceded to their demands; the great body of them then retired; but there remained Wat Tyler, with a rabble that broke into the Tower, where they murdered, besides other lords, the Archbishop of Canterbury. It was this rabble that the king met on the 17th in Smithfield, when, upon Tyler's touching his dagger and laying a hand on the king's bridle, Walworth, the mayor, stabbed him. Then, according to the

well-known story of that day, his followers bent their bows, crying, "They have killed our captain, slay them all;" but the boy king, then only fifteen years old, fearlessly galloped up to them, saying, "What are you about, my friends? Tyler was a traitor; I am your king; I will be your captain;" and putting himself at their head, led them across the fields to Islington. There a force came to his support, by which he was enabled to compel submission; but at the intercession of Sir Robert Knolles, who had brought the soldiery, the king suffered the mob to disperse without attacking them. Richard afterwards revoked the concessions that had been extorted from him, and the insurrection was avenged and what remained of it was put down with unsparing cruelty; upon which followed immediately the third of the great plague-years of that century. To the credit of the king or his counsellors, it should be remembered that he did advise the next parliament to abolish bondage; but the ruling class refused consent to the proposal.

When in the May of 1381 John Gower, Esquire, as a wealthy gentleman of Kent, found himself living in the very heart of this wild insurrection, all his sympathies were with the ruling class that it attacked. But senseless as the uproar seemed to him, he believed it to be really a sign of social evils that were ruining the state. In his

‘*Vox Clamantis*,’¹

a Latin poem, in seven books, of alternate hexameter and pentameter, the

First Book, which is almost a fourth part of the whole work, begins by telling of a day in the fourth year of Richard II.'s reign, a day in June, when smiling Nature was most lavish of her gifts. Then dews refreshed the earth, fields yielded their pasture to the cattle, earth was bright with the many tints of flowers yielding their delights and uses up to man, while the cuckoo, the dove, and the lark, and the nightingale, and the thousand thousand birds blended their music with the ripple of the life-giving waters and the odour of the flowers. He gave his heart up to enjoyment of God's world, then throbbing with light and warmth, until the bright day closed.

Sorrow comes often after gladness; sickness after health. In the silence of the night he lay sleepless, struck with sudden fear, possessed by care, seeing the past, and shrinking from the future. Then, it was on

¹ ‘Poema quod dicitur Vox Clamantis, necnon Chronica Tripartita, auctore Johanne Gower, nunc primum edidit H. O. Coxe, M.A., impensis Societatis Roxburgensis. London, 1850.’

a Tuesday, when the night was nearly spent, and the morning star heralded dawn, there came sleep with a dream, in which he thought that, as he went to gather flowers in the fields, he saw innumerable monsters. Scattered crowds of the common people, roaming about the fields, were suddenly struck with the curse of God and changed into wild beasts, changing the reason of men for brutish unreason. Asses, disdaining the curb, rose like wild lions to seek their prey; and, leaping about the fields, terrified all the citizens with their Hee-aw.¹ They would no longer carry sacks into the town, nor bend their backs to any burden. They claim to be lodged and combed like the horses. So the ass leapt higher than the leopard, and carried a longer tail than the lion himself. The newness of things put all ancient law to flight. With the senseless asses there came oxen, into whom none dared to thrust the goad, and butting with the horns whereby they were led yesterday to cultivate the fields. They claim to carry their necks free and erect, yoked no longer to the plough. These became monsters bear-footed, dragon-tailed, and breathing fire out of their mouths. What herdsman will care to guard and protect such cattle? The wide fields lie waste. Ox is a lion; ox is a leopard; ox is a bear: but his old character as ox he has forgotten.

Slumber deepened, and there were dreams. After the oxen I saw a herd of unclean swine possessed by the devil, and none dared put a ring into their noses to prevent them from uprooting, wolfish now, not swinish, by their nature. Among them was one boar [Wat Tyler], whom Kent produced. Earth could not produce his like. With shining eyes, and breathing out flames, from whose burning there is no house far removed, lightning flies from his mouth, at the blast of it a city burns, and he prepares for war with elephantine tusks. Then I saw dogs, as thousands of hounds, who shook the fields with their angry barking; untrained dogs, who take no pleasure in the huntsman's horn, but turn to bark upon the hunters; watch-dog with broken chain, mastiff, sheep-dog, all have broken loose, and with teeth displayed, and tails proudly erect, seek to tear whatever they find sound. Their bite is pestilent. The more they eat, the more insatiate they hunger. When the barking of these dogs reaches the ears of Satan, he and his hell rejoice at the new sound. Cerberus strains at his chain in sympathy, breaks it, and rushes up, full speed, to join and lead the riot.

And as the dream went on, there came with it new monsters. The cats turned wild and came abroad—these figuring the domestic servants broken loose; and foxes—these the thieves broken from jail. The cock came with the falcon's beak and claws, and his pleasant morning crow is changed into a fearful shrieking. The goose is a kite circling over prey. The owl preys no more by night and in secret, but flies out among the birds of day.

And as the sleep and dream continued, there swarmed every kind of fly and wasp, with bite and sting, and there rose up a new plague of devouring frogs, that scattered poison. Beelzebub, their prince, came to lead the host of the flies. And when all these monsters were gathered

¹ "Terruit en cunctos sua sternutatio cives
Dum geminant solita voce frequenter Yha!"

together as the sands of the shore [a jay, a bird commonly known as Wat in Gower's time], a jay that had learnt to talk, with stretched wings claimed to be their leader. Fierce of voice, cruel of face, the very image of death, he fixed their attention, mounted to the top of a tree, and spoke.

"O servile, miserable race, whom the world by its law long since subdued to its own uses, behold, now is the day come when rustic strength is to prevail, and good breeding must go its way. Have done with honour! Perish law! What virtue has existed before now, let it last no longer in the world! Let an end be made of the law that used to keep us down, and the rest be as our court shall rule!" "So be it!" cried they all, and followed Wat the Jay.

The accursed progeny of Cain came then to join their hosts, Gog and Magog, and the rout of servants of Ulysses, whom Circe changed into unreasoning beasts. Then is it that Wat calls. Tom comes, and Sim delays not. But the next lines Thomas Fuller has translated.

"As the Philistines," says Fuller,¹ "came out in three companies to destroy all the swords and smiths in Israel, so this rabble of rebels, making itself tripartite, endeavoured the rooting out of all penknives, and all appearance of learning. One in Kent, under the aforesaid Wat and John" (Wat Tyler and Jack Straw); "the second in Suffolk; the third under John Littstarre, a dyer, in Norfolk. The former of these is described in the Latin verses of John Gower, prince of poets in his time, of whom we will bestow the following translation :

" 'Watte vocat, cui Thomme venit, neque Symme retardat,
Recteque Gibbe simul Hicke venire jubent :
Colle furit, quem Geffe juvat, nocumenta parantes,
Cum quibus ad damnum Wille coire vovet.
Grigge rapit dum Dawe strepit, comes est quibus Hobbe,
Lorkin et in medio non minor esse putat ;
Hadde ferit, quos Judde terit, dum Cebbe minatur,
Jacke domosque viros vellit et ense necat.'"

Tom comes thereat when called by Wat, and Simm as forward we find ;
Bet calls as quick to Gibb and to Hykk, that neither would tarry behind.
Jeff, a good whelp of that litter, doth help mad Coll more mischief to do,
And Will he doth vow, the time is come now, he'll join with their company too.
Davie complains, while Grigg gets the gains, and Hobb with them doth partake,
Lorkin aloud, in the midst of the crowd, conceiveth as deep is his stake.
Hadde doth spoil, whom Judde doth foil, and Tebb lends his helping hand,
But Jack, the mad patch, men and houses doth snatch, and kills all at his command.

Oh the methodical description of a confusion!" Fuller adds. "How doth Wat lead the front, and Jack bring up the rear!"

¹ 'Church History,' bk. iv. A.D. 1380 (vol. ii. pp. 353-4, Brewer's edition). Taking Gower's text, however, from the Roxburghe edition, I have followed it in altering Fuller's Gibb to Jeff in the third line.

But in fact Gower brings up the rear, not with Jack Straw, but with John Ball, the excommunicated priest, who preached to the people on the text—

“ When Adam delv'd, and Eve span,
Who was then the gentleman? ”

Fuller broke off four lines before the end of Gower's catalogue of heroes, and his translation should have been completed somewhat thus:—

“ Hogg, strutting elate, in his glory of state, believeth no king is as great
Or as noble as he, who is now proved to be nobility's natural mate.
Ball was the preacher, the prophet and teacher, inspired by a spirit of hell,
And every fool was advanced in his school, to be taught as the devil thought
well.”

With lively force Gower's verse tells how in his dream the bestial mob raged, how it was armed, how, instigated by the devil, it attacked on the Thursday festival of Corpus Christi, London, the Troynovant, wasted by them as the Troy of old was wasted. He sees the rabble in the Tower cut the throat of Simon Sudbury, Archbishop of Canterbury—murder that must be avenged, as was that of Thomas à Becket. Rapine and murder were in the city. Men of station and learning fled into the woods and fields, and became wanderers. Terror spread to the neighbouring towns. The poet, dreaming, suffered in his own person the distresses of these outcasts. He went, also, with those who fled thither for protection, into the Tower of London, as into a ship running her perilous course, through storm, by the whirlpool of Scylla. The storm increases in fury—from above it thunders, below them are rent asunder the abysses of the waters, and for those on board the imperilled ship there is no help but in God, who at last stills the storm, the proud Jay being sacrificed by the sword of a Mayor, William, whose mind the honest spirit in his heart stirred to high deeds. Blessed be the Lord that stilled the tempest by that one sufficient holocaust. The dreamer, kneeling with palms folded towards heaven, said, “ Glory be to thee, O Christ! ” and in repeating this, recovered from his terror.

But he slept still, and still saw a ship without oars, drifting in vain search of safe harbourage. From that ship the dreamer landed on an island where was a great crowd of people, and he asked of them what island that was, and what the crowd of its people. An old man answered him, with horrid voice, “ This once was called the Island of exiled Brut, which merciful Diana gave to him; for here that people dwells whose dissonant rites are most remote from Love. Because this race was formed of various races, various are its errors; here, indeed, are noble forms, but tempers as of the wild wolf; they fear no laws, trample with force upon the right, and vanquished justice dies under the sword. A pestilent mob spreads fraud, and crime, and fury; men here have stormier bosoms than the sea. This soil is ever wet with bloody death; the sad, unshapely wormwood clothes our fields, the earth bears for us only bitterness. But the sun's round clips not a worthier race, had but its people love to one another.”

Then the dreamer in his grief found he had reached a port as full of

doubts and terrors as the sea from which he had escaped. His hope failed again when he saw to what a harbour he was come. He fell to the ground in grief, and when he raised his head there was no ship, no crowd. He was alone in darkness; and a voice from heaven warned him of the vanity of sorrow. If he was in an island of discord, let there be strife without, and peace within his doors, and let him seek the less for worldly occupation. When passions flowed in on him let him yield to them, and float loose on the tide. A Divine power works in the affairs of men; there is no sure reliance on the present hour. Act always timidly, speaking of glad things as if they might be turned to troubles. The silent man is strong. Rest nourishes; excess of labour has its hurt. Nature's wants are moderate; it is the abundance of excess that brings man ever into the mood of want. As the times give you leisure, I admonish you quickly to write what in this dream you have seen and heard; for dreams often contain warnings of the future. With the dreamer's quiet resolve to obey the voice bidding him do this, the first of the seven books of the 'Vox Clamantis' ends.

The Second Book tells how, being awake, Gower proceeded, according to the counsel of the voice heard in his dream, to write what he had seen and heard of the world. He invokes, he says, no Muses, but will sacrifice to God alone, whose Holy Spirit he invokes, as in the name of Christ he undertakes his labour. If he seem unpolished to his reader, let the reader spare the faults and look to the inner meaning of his work. And again and again he asks that the soul of his book, not its mere form, be looked to. The eye is blind, and the ear deaf, he says, that convey nothing down to the heart's depths; and the heart that does not utter what it knows is as a live coal hid under ashes. If I know little, there may be another whom that little will help. Poor, I give of my scanty store; for I would rather be of small use than of none. But to the man who believes in God no power is unattainable if he but rightly feels his work; he ever has enough whom God increases. A little light may shine through a great darkness; the water of a rivulet is sweet. What follows I say not of myself, but as an instructed messenger. From many a different flower have I filled my honeycomb; there are shells here from many a shore. Many an example from the ancient doctors fortifies my verse, and the voice of one crying ('Vox Clamantis') shall be the name of this volume, because there are written in it the words that come of a fresh grief.

"Vox Clamantis erit nomenque voluminis hujus
Quod sibi scripta novi verba doloris habet."

The work now becomes a didactic argument on the condition of society in Gower's time, prompted by the significant outbreak described in the first book. The second book teaches that the affairs of men go ill or well, not by Fortune, upon whom every one lays the blame, but according to the manner in which they fulfil their duties before God. Having shown this from Scripture, Gower sings of faith in the triune God, and in Christ Jesus, his incarnate Son—sings of God, whose glory and power are beyond man's comprehension, and whose love demands man's love, though none can ever love Him worthily. God only can bless the Church. Man bows to images of wood; being himself God's nobler image. The

world was made to be man's servant, not his god. The sculptor is greater than his carving. We have carvings as memorials, for we believe in God, and not in gods. If images are made and adorned in order that gifts for them may be got from the people, I know not the merit of that workmanship. We reverence the sign of the Cross in honour of Jesus, who, through it, has made us free. His is its mighty power. God the Creator governs all; the Maker's hand is shown in all his work. As we do, so we rejoice or suffer. There is no misfortune, no good luck for men. Whatever happens among us, for good or ill, comes with our own doing—"nos sumus in causâ."

Thus, having shown (in his first book) the terrible condition of his country in his time, Gower takes it to heart, arguing (in his second book) that misfortune is a heathenish word, that God, not Fortune, rules, and lives of men and nations are shaped by their conduct under His wise governance. Then he proposes, in his

Third Book, to consider what the conduct of men is in his own day; what they must cure who would cure the distresses of the land; and prays again God's pardon and aid for his weakness. I do not, he says, affect to touch the stars, or write the wonders of the poles; but rather, with the common human voice that is lamenting in this land, I write the ills I see. God knows, my wish is to be useful, that is the prayer that directs my labour. No hatred urges me. In the Voice of my Crying there will be nothing doubtful, for every man's knowledge will be its best interpreter. He prays that his verse may not be turgid, that there may be in it no word of untruth, that each word may answer to the thing it speaks of pleasantly and fitly, that he may flatter in it no one, and seek in it no praise above the praise of God. Give me, that there shall be less vice and more virtue for my speaking. Such is the true-hearted prologue to the third book, in which John Gower begins his study of the life of his own time.

He then divides society into three classes, represented by clerk, soldier, and ploughman, and speaks of the clergy first, giving two books (the third and fourth) to the discussion of their state. Beginning with the prelates, his first topic is the schism in the papacy, one pope schismatic, and the other sound. France, he says, follows the schismatic (Clement), but England holds everywhere to the right faith. Otherwise, among prelates who follow Christ, there is no guiding rule. Christ was poor, they heap together wealth. Christ gave on earth peace, they only stir up wars. Christ gave freely, they are as locked boxes. He lived to labour, but they take their ease; Christ was gentle, they are impetuous. He walked in humility, they walk in pride. Christ was full of pity, they wreak vengeance. Christ was chaste, they seldom live modest lives. He was a good shepherd, but they devour the sheep. They, with full stomach, praise the Fasting of the Lord. We seek and worship wealth. The poor man shall be a fool; though he speak with the lips of Cato, and Dives shall be a wise man, although he know nothing. There is no poor wise man. If the poor man be wise, he is a poor man and nothing else. To this mind the prelates conform themselves more than to the mind of Christ. Some, living delicately, pamper to excess their fleshly appetites; others desire the episcopacy for the sake of worldly

gain, as servants of God for the love of mammon, and, rich in temporal goods, have laid up no treasure in heaven. The mere shadow of Peter healed the sick; but our light, our voice, our prayer, wants power to be helpful. Christ gave and left his peace to his disciples. Yet against His positive laws, the prelates make war upon Christians for worldly gain, when they should, with piety and patience, love God and their neighbour, and, instead of stirring war, labour to subdue, with God's help obtained by prayer and gentleness, the malice of the world.

As the temporal chiefs of the world may not assert rule in spiritual matters, so neither should the spiritual chiefs take leading part in the dissensions worldly pride and avarice produce. It does not befit the Pope to wear the arms of Cæsar. Gold pours ever down the throat of the Church, and not one little drop comes back. O Head of the Church, recall the times of Christ, and see whether there be in them any example like that which you follow. A clergy withdrawn from the law of piety has made that the tail of the Church which used to be its head. Its health is its disease; its life, its death; its lifting up, its fall; its law, its error; and its own Father, its enemy.¹

Why do the prelates preach peace, and promote dissension? We call the heathen to our peace, that they may escape suffering upon our cross, and levy war on Christians, who barely speak of their own rights. Peter cut off an ear, which Christ, by stretching forth his hand, made whole again; we cut off a head, which there is no power to put on again; and so our sword of the Church is stronger than the sword of Peter. The Church seizes to itself the goods of its neighbour, and then calls them sanctified, wherefore no neighbour may seize goods of the Church. So the pastor does not lead his sheep to pasture, but himself pastures upon them, like another wolf, and construes his Gospel of St. Mark, *Marcam pro Marco*.²

The simony of the prelates brings into the sheepfold robbers who have not come in by the gate. Christ bade his followers turn the other cheek to the smiter, but let any man offend the prelates, and they curse death upon his soul. Calling themselves the Church, to themselves they permit all things; they will bear no weight on their shoulders, while they hang the burden of their law on other necks. They will sit with the blessed at the right hand of Christ, but they will not drink of His cup. But the

¹ "Proh dolor! a clero, pietatis jure remoto,
Cauda fit ecclesiæ qui solet esse caput,
Fitque salus morbus, fit vitæque mors, relevamen
Lapsus, lex error, hostis et ipse pater."—Lib. iii. cap. 9.

² "Sic libras sitiens libros non appetit, immo
Marcam pro Marco construit ipse libro:
Summas non summa memoratur, et optima vina
Plusquam divina computat esse sacra:
Virtutis morem non sed mulieris amorem
Quærit, et hoc solo tentat arare solo."

Gower, like Walter Map, and other mediæval Latin poets, often slips thus into a round of puns.

good prelate should, by his own deeds, be as light to the blind, food to the fasting, extreme unction to the sick. Rome bites the hand that does not bring a gift. From the court of Rome Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John would get no answer to any of their asking, if they took no gift with them. I know not whether Antichrist be come, but here are signs of him. The Pharisees sit in the seat of Moses, the scribes dogmatise, the shepherds care only for plunder, and the sheep wander astray. Give us, O God, prelates who will lead the people in right ways. For, if our clergy be good, we also shall be better than we are.

Of the Rectors, too, who are appointed under the prelates to the care of parishes, some leave the care of their parishes to serve a magnate at the court; others take licence from their bishops to attend the schools of divinity, that, in the name of a virtue, they may gratify their lusts; others live in their parishes, but neglect duty for hare, and fox, and hunting. They feed dogs, not men; and when they speak of God, think of a hare. There the fox hunts for the fox, like following like, and the fair women of his parish are to this rector as to the fox the hen, or as to the wolf the sheep. A fourth sort of rector again is he who lives in his parish and buys and sells from day to day, that he may amass the riches of this world. Harder than iron, he is conquered by soft woman's flesh, and so one hand scatters what the other gains.

There are the stipendiary priests also without cures, who have taken orders that they may trade on the calling. They go, money in hand, on traffic of simony to Rome, and come back, prosperous, to their church, their women, and their wine. He who would have at home a clean wife and clean chambers, let him keep out of his house the priest and the pigeon.¹

Of what worth are the undevout prayers of libidinous and drunken priests? God knows whether the prayers are lost that are intrusted to them. I know only that he who has given bread to the hungry, clothed the naked, visited the sick, will have merits debited to him for his goodness. The clergyman says that, though he be full of offence, it is not for the layman to impute crime to him. He will accuse the laity, but will not be accused by them; he claims to go unbridled. But a lawless clergy makes a lawless people, that knows nothing of clergy and right. He who defies the law forfeits what honour it concedes to him. Again, the priest says that he is not more sensual than laymen; I am of like flesh with my neighbour. So he declares himself free as all other men to vice when in the station to which he should have attained by five steps of probation, and which is, of all others, the most sacred. He who is to give an example of virtue and is vicious, that teacher errs more than the taught, in my opinion. The poet then dwells on the mysteries of the sacerdotal order, first, as signified in the garments of the priests,—the purity of the white linen, the restriction of the belt, &c.; then as foreshadowed in the sacrifices of the old law, showing that both the old and the new law demand a clean priest. The priest also must be of years of discretion

¹ "Longius a camera sit presbyter atque columba,
Stercora fundit ea, fundit et ipse stupra."

before he can assume his office. The shaven head is a type of the successful struggle with worldliness. The roots of worldliness remain in the flesh, and, cropping up only the stronger for the razor, struggle to efface the pattern of a spiritual cleanliness. The priest is never shaved so clean that he has conquered for good, and can cease to combat with the tendencies of the flesh. By his shaven head, therefore, he is admonished that he must maintain a daily struggle for his purity of life. The good priest sustains his people in well-doing, but the bad priest multiplies for his brother the occasions of offending.

From the secular priests, the Voice of the poet's Crying turns against the error of the Schools which feed the roots of the Church, and says that youths are drawn into the priestly order chiefly by these motives: escape from the whip of common law, escape from toil, and certainty of being clothed and victualled. There is a better motive than all these, the school's delight in a good pupil; but that belonged to ancient days rather than to ours. And so it is now, that a clergy blind and immoral causes us laity to stray hither and thither without light. To that conclusion is the third book brought.

The Fourth Book of the 'Vox Clamantis' cries out upon the cloistered clergy. Sacred as are the orders of the monks, they are desecrated by greed and gluttony; men vowed to poverty grasp wealth, vowed to abstinence, they pamper their bodies. They are silent at meals, that talking may not impede the work of their teeth; they drink sitting, that their legs may not fail under the weight of their bellies; they are shaven, that they may have no lock of hair to fall into their cups; they wear wide flowing robes, to veil the largeness of their bellies. Unknown to their superiors, they put to vile use the worldly riches of the Church. Though their founder was Benedict, yet have they not God's benediction. The monks should no more wander abroad out of their cloisters than the fish out of their seas. Fouler than a black carrion crow is the monk who has taken his black habit for worldly gains. Patience and Peace have fled the cloisters, Chastity lies dead in them, luxury now wastes the houses of the monks, Hypocrisy has taken thither Falsehood for his mistress, and my lord Worldliness rules all. As are the excesses of the monks, so are those of the erring canons; but of all men most miserable, are the men of ill life professing cloistered godliness. He who enters a religious order should put off the vices of the world, humbly repent, seek peace, be chaste, drink water, wear rough garments, and sleep little. His mouth should be upon the ground, his mind in heaven; and he should speak plain words from a plain heart. The mind humble, the eye single, the flesh clean, the heart pious, the faith right, the hope firm, so is the way sped.

Weak and inconstant women there are in monastic habit who, under profession of religion, follow the nature of their frailer sex in seeking that which is forbidden.¹ The ordinary who makes visitation to correct errors among women who have taken the veil, often respects no more the spouses of Christ than he does those of men.

¹ "Nec schola, nec sensus, constantia, nullaue virtus,
Sicut habent homines, in muliere vigent."—Lib. xiii. cap. 14.



The Cry is next against the order of Mendicant Friars, who tacitly usurp the wealth and luxury and worldly influence they have professedly forsworn, who preach as hypocrites, and salve in private sins they publicly denounce, coming never thrice to a house from which they take no worldly gain away. I seek not that they should perish, but that they be broken and joined together in the state first settled for them by their Order. Some affect, in defiance of their vows, to be masters in the schools, and swell with a pomp of theology; or wander abroad, apt as the chameleon to change colour, now physicians, now confessors, now adulterers. To the Church of Christ, these friars, living without rule, are in no way necessary; they are kept but as black crows among white doves. Every good husbandman roots out the thistles from his field; let not herb Pharisee pollute our holy ground. To the common good also these friars, living without rule, are in no way necessary; they do not fight, they do not till the ground, they are not of the clergy, though they do usurp their honour. They feed neither the people's bodies nor their souls. Of what good, then, are they? They are as numerous as acorns on the oak, they neither plough, nor sow, nor reap, yet the world feeds them. What honour is it for a coward to be Hector's son, or for an apostate brother to be of the house of self-denying Francis? But to those of the house who are still justly fulfilling his commands, the due honour remains.

St. Francis received men of discretion into an order which now scarcely a discreet adult will join. Infants who know nothing are now ensnared into its net, thus by deceit won to be deceivers. Woe unto you that go about the world to make one proselyte; as it was said to the Pharisees may it be said now to the friars. A man may serve one of three masters, God, the World, or the Apostate Devil. We see that the friar does not obey God's rule. He says that he is not of the world, that he should do a layman's duties to his country. It is the devil's yoke then that he wears. He wanders in search of delicacies as a wolf among the sheep, he houses himself at great cost, and lives, eager of body, slow of wit. However the friars differ in their dress, they are of like condition; there remains and increases more and more the sacred order consecrated once on a time by brother Brunellus.¹ All the decretals of Brunellus I will not repeat, but I will cite two of his commands that are to this day laws. The first was that you friars should have and do in the world whatever you liked; be hirelings if you wished to sell yourselves; be adulterers if you desired adultery; and whatsoever flesh a friar might desire, that should be lawful possession of the blessed brother. He further ordained, as a second law, that all hurt of the flesh be far from you, that whatever is of the spirit be accounted vile among your order, and that the flesh have all its dalliance and delight. Loosen the desires of your hearts, for there shall be none to bind you; take your own ways everywhere, free to go as you will. This worthier order of Brunellus yet remains to us. Away with Bernard and with Benedict. I have no prior but Brunel. But if ill times come, when the prayers of those who should be spiritual leaders of the people are but a vain croaking, what shall put a soul into

¹ See Book I., ch. xvii.

our corrupt body? I have spoken as others speak of the clergy, for the flock is scattered abroad without a shepherd, and behold it seeks everywhere the pasture of a new offending.

With this application to his own time of the satire of Nigel Wireker's Brunellus, Gower ends the fourth book of his 'Vox Clamantis;' and in the

Fifth Book turns to the soldier and to the pure ideal of his knightly honour, from which neither love of women nor the love of gold should make him swerve. Animal love is not a just guide to honour, but a disease begetting contradiction, which the poet expresses in thirty or forty lines of antithesis. Then he paints a picture of the sort of woman who takes captive the judgment, and argues of the loss of knightly worth in those who are her prisoners. Whether enterprise of arms be prompted by love of woman, or for empty worldly renown, alike in vain is its praise sung if God be not the author of the praise. There is shame in the knight's honour when God knows its praise is undeserved. Yet through a good woman God passed down to earth, and from a good woman all honest things proceed. Out of her honest love come the good works of love. Her lover sits with honour in the gate. She is a good angel. The bad woman is an angel, too, but of the angels by whom men are tempted to their ruin.

After dwelling on this theme, Gower sings the praise of the true soldier to whom other ranks of society owe common security, and then shows what hurt can come of an unsound soldiery, rapacious and luxurious, spoiling the poor. Let the knight hold honour more precious than gold, pay God his vows, and in God's name he shall prevail. But now, alas! I see that honour is of less esteem than gold, the world and its flesh are preferred to God. In number the soldiery increase,^s in service decrease, and their honour becomes empty when their duty is left unperformed.

Then he speaks of the serf, dull in ignorance and vice, who tills the earth; and of the hired servants who can scarcely be held for a month to their engagements. They disdain to eat common food, find salt meat hurtful, quarrel with the cooking, grumble when there is no roast, say they are none the better for their beer or peas, and will not come again if you do not set a better dinner before them to-morrow. The poor son of poverty creates himself a lord out of his own stomach, and obeys none other. Loving no man, and not knowing that there is a God, if justice were not armed with terrors, he would soon trample, like a beast, over his master.

But the fruits of the earth that such men till vary in divers lands: and what of the merchants who transfer the produce of one region, to those who desire it in another? The two daughters of Avarice, Usury and Fraud, born in the city, receive secret homage there. Young Fraud at his shop-door cries different wares, whatever you wish to have. He calls as many names of things as there are stars in heaven. Those whom he cannot talk in, he drags in. "Here," he says, "is what you are looking for—see, come!" So the clamorous apprentice fetches the people into the den of cheating when the master is at hand. For when Old Fraud compounds his lying tale, none can escape uncircumvented. If the wise man enter, Fraud is wiser than he; and the fool who goes in, comes out

the more fool he. Fraud charges this or that a double price, saying, "Thus it came from Paris or from Flanders." What is wanting in the thing is made up with words upon oath, and God himself is wounded for a penny. But we see full houses where the house has in it nothing of its own. So by hypocrisy the citizen wins from the people honour of the bended knee. But when each comes to his own, the crow plucked of his stolen feathers will fly naked. Fraud comes also into the country for wool, mixes wines, sells cloth by a dim light, when touch must make good the defect of sight; and takes often to itself, by unjust weights, a sixth part of that which it should put into the scales. The goldsmith withholds part of your gold, sells under false name glass jewels precious to the eye. If you want a coat made, Fraud cuts a piece for himself out of the cloth. Among the citizens, too, is the evil tongue of scandal breeding strife and schism.

Fire and water, when they have mastery, are pitiless; more pitiless is the untaught crowd. Wash away past perjuries and perfidy; with love and truth, the fortune we despair of may return. The empire passed from Rome when her people ceased to be united. Athens was glorious only while there was unanimity among her citizens. But, with God's help, may their decay be far from our long illustrious city.

The Sixth Book laments the misconduct of the lawyers. Gower distinguishes between law, as the rule of justice, and law as made a source of profit by its ministers, a snare for the ignorant. He tells of the large estates made by the pleaders and advocates who prey upon their neighbours, but whose wealth, robbed of the world by worldly cunning, the world gets to itself again, for their estates seldom descend to the third heir. The more numerous the lawyers are, the more they hunger and seek to entangle timid prey within the meshes of their subtleties, showing a colour of the law. They aspire to become judges, and are judges influenced by gifts, by friendship, and by fear; blind to the judgment of God, whose equal law should be their study, and by whom, when all that is dear to them in the flesh has passed away, they shall themselves stand to receive judgment. Complaint is next made that the sheriffs, bailiffs, and jurors receive bribes, and deny justice to the poor. An unlearned boy-king is negligent of the moral deeds by which the man grows out of the boy. A youthful assembly follows him as their leader, with such counsels as he wills to have. Elder men humour him for their greed, and the king's court contains all that is vicious. Error encompasses the boy on every side. The mother does not know the fate of her child, but time reveals. So the people are complaining everywhere, in doubt because of the gravity of the evil; and I, lamenting with them, write to the boy-king thus. In direct address the "good young king" Richard is then admonished to learn to rule himself, to avoid dishonest ministers, and company of unjust men, and be deaf to counsellors of war and plunder, and to those who would have taxes from his people, and to shun the avaricious man as death. Let him lift up the laws of the Church, be just and merciful in judgment, so use his royal liberty as not to become a slave to vice, be humble, reliable of spoken as of written word, avoid sudden anger, lust, avarice; be charitable to the poor, liberal of his goods, but careful to whom he gives. Be free, also, king, from the sin of gluttony, drive

out the inertness and oppose the promptings of the flesh, and strongly lay hold on the good way. O tender of years, in whom is no guile, simple nobility, beware of the darts of perfidy. For your age does not give you capacity for guile, and your race will not be degenerate in you. You have beauty, race, honour, rank, and power; your birth gives you these gifts; may praise, virtue, grace of manners, follow you; and, pious king, so, as a full man, live in God.—Above all things, he is to avoid lust of the flesh, living ever faithful to his queen. The poet sets before him, as a king, the noble example of his father. Avoiding war without just cause, kind rather than austere, seeking wisdom, subject to God, who alone is to be feared, let him live in love of God and of his neighbour, ready for death, great in the eyes of his subjects, as he is found humble in the eyes of God. The long letter to the king is then followed by reflections on the strife and divisions of the world and of the kingdom, with which this sixth book of the 'Vox Clamantis' ends.

The Seventh and last Book opens with an application of Nebuchadnezzar's dream to the state of society,—man's hard avarice being the iron in the feet of the image, and his lusts the clay. It expresses open discontent at the king's administration, and the enrichment of individuals by taxes levied in the name of war; and it argues that the world is a good world to those who make right and thankful use of the delights that God has given. Man being the microcosm, the world around him will be good or bad, as he is himself good or bad. With his body that must perish, the corruptible things of this earth also rot away,—its pride and its envy, its wrath, avarice, sloth, gluttony, and luxury. Other reminders of the perishableness of this world then follow, with practical contrast between the deaths of the righteous and of the wicked. Each should turn, therefore, to right-doing and implore God's pardon for what is left undone; but few quit life's pleasures, for the love of heaven or the fear of hell. Famine, plague, earthquake, signs from heaven, war, kingdom against kingdom, its sin has already brought upon the world, where prelates, curates, priests, scholars, monks, friars, soldiers, merchants, lawyers are degenerate from their old state of piety and heavenward knowledge, chastity, thankfulness, simple honesty, and justice that could not be influenced or bought. Gower declares then his especial love for the land of his birth, in which he was educated and has always dwelt, and prays that God will give it peace and honest purity of life. He repeats that what he has written is not his own complaint, but the voice of the people, revealed to him in his dream. It touches only the guilty; and may each correct his own fault where he finds it. Here is the Voice of the people, but often where the people Cries, is God.

In his old age, after the accession of King Henry IV., Gower added to this poem a supplement, under the name of

The 'Tripartite Chronicle.'—Part I.

Here ends the book which is called 'Vox Clamantis,' founded chiefly upon the subject of the first misfortune that happened, as you have heard, in England—notably as by the rod of God—to the unfortunate Richard II. at the beginning of his reign. And now farther, because he, not thereby

repentant, but hardened more and more into the manner of a tyrant, did not desist from incessant scourging of his kingdom with assiduous oppressions, the flail of Divine vengeance proceeded not undeservedly to the extremity of his deposition. For then three nobles of the kingdom specially moved upon this,—namely, Thomas Duke of Gloucester, who is commonly called the Swan, Richard Earl of Arundel, who is called the Horse, and Thomas Earl of Warwick, who is called the Bear,—these unanimously, with other nobles, their adherents, that they might wipe out the favourers of royal malice, to the praise of God and wellbeing of the kingdom, made with strong hand and just mind manful insurrection, as in this following Chronicle, which is 'Tripartite,' the writer intends more manifestly to declare.

Of the 'Tripartite Chronicle,' written in leonine hexameter, the first part is said in a few opening verses to tell human work; the second, hellish work; the third, a work in Christ. The first part then opens with the year 1387 [six years after the Wat Tyler insurrection, when the king was 21 years old, and lived so wastefully that he is said to have had an establishment of ten thousand persons, three hundred of them in his kitchen]. In that year there were fourteen lords appointed to administer the country; but the king, not fearing the rod of God, turned from their counsels to those of his young and foolish comrades. [These fourteen lords were the Commission of Regency which the Commons had forced on the king, and endowed for one year, from Nov. 19, 1386, with power that it should be treason to oppose.] The king's malice was especially urged against three nobles, the Swan, the Bear, and the Horse. He got venal lawyers to proceed against them; but in vain asked help of the citizens of London. He sent the Boar, the Earl of Oxford, with troops and a royal flag to the neighbourhood of Chester, but being met by the Swan (the Duke of Gloucester) on a certain Friday, the Boar was defeated so completely that, changed into a hare, he fled beyond the sea. So also did the Archbishop of York, the King's Chancellor, Michael de la Pole, Earl of Suffolk, and the Bishop of Chichester, the King's Confessor. The three chiefs then marching to London, where the king was in the Tower, and having taken possession of the Tower, obtained from the king a Parliament for the cleansing and repair of the kingdom. The Parliament declared that the chiefs who had fled into exile were perpetually banished, and, proceeded gradually against the king's evil advisers, of whom, as the chief, the King's Chamberlain, Sir Simon Burleigh, was beheaded; also Beauchamp, his Seneschal, whom he had created Baron Bridgnorth, Nicholas Brembel, Lord Mayor of London, and Robert Tresilian, Judge of the King's Bench, were hanged; the other judges who had abetted the king in his evil courses were banished to Ireland. False priests and flattering confessors were dispersed; the three lords resisted every temptation of their justice, whether by prayers or by gifts. Honour, therefore, to the Swan, the Horse, and the Bear, who, as examples of well-doing, support the kingdom, and bear others' burdens.

This is Gower's narrative of the events of November, when the year of Commission had almost elapsed, and on the 10th the king entered London, encouraged by his flatterers to proceed in

enmity against those who had proposed or supported the Commission; on the 11th the Swan and the Horse, which are the Duke of Gloucester and Earl of Arundel, together with the Earl of Nottingham, the three men respectively Constable, Admiral, and Marshal of England, were known to be marching upon London at the head of forty thousand men; and on the 12th those strong protesters were joined by John of Gaunt's son, the Earl of Derby, and Warwick the Bear.

The story of Gower's Second Part is that of Richard's *coup d'état*. Our language of free men has not a word of its own for that act of overruling violence which makes for a short time a single despot master of a people. In 1389 the king, being in his twenty-second year, declared himself old enough to manage his own affairs, and was left free to do so. During the next eight years, in wholesome awe of his uncles and of his people, he ruled with sufficient moderation, gradually lapsing into visible impatience of restraint; and there was, during this time, no violent domestic strife. It was in 1393 ("the yere sixtenth of King Richard") that Gower was writing his 'Confessio Amantis,' in accordance with the king's request made at a chance meeting. Gower then, like other patriots, was loyally paying him the honour due to his apparent good intentions, and, considering his youth and noble birth, as son of the Black Prince, due also to the possible ripening of character, now that he had bought much hard experience among the follies of his earlier career. It was in the middle of this eight-year interval, or later, that John Gower, despairing of his king and unwilling to despair of his country, erased from the completed English poem its tributes of homage to Richard, and dedicated it to Henry Earl of Derby. Thenceforth he neither had nor expressed hope of Richard; and, after the *coup d'état* of 1397, English John Gower detested him as the public enemy, openly, utterly, and with the most sufficient reason.

When about to ally himself with France in 1396 by marriage with an eight-year-old French princess, Froissart tells that King Richard spoke to the Count of St. Pol, the French king's representative, of his uncles, among whom Gloucester was adverse to the French match. He said that if he stirred the people to rebellion his crown was lost. St. Pol advised dissimulation till

the match was made, telling how "that done, he would be of puissance to oppress all his rebels; for he might rely on aid from the French king." "Thus shall I do," said Richard; and thus he did. Having secured the French alliance, Richard invited the Earl of Warwick to dine with him, and, by a treacherous breach of hospitality, arrested him and made him prisoner. The Earl of Arundel was invited to a conference, assured by the king's oath that he should not be injured in person or property. He was seized at the conference, sent to prison in the Isle of Wight, and afterwards beheaded. By treachery as false the Duke of Gloucester was seized, imprisoned, and murdered. At the same time there was obtained from a servile Parliament a statute (of the twenty-first year of Richard II. 1397-8), which was virtually abnegation of the power of the Lords and Commons, and its transfer to a junta of the creatures of the king. It was but a few months before these events that Gower had resigned his Essex rectory, and married a wife into the quiet home of his old age among the clergy of St. Mary Overies. The king's treacheries, that were the shame and trouble of the first month following his marriage, are the subject of the Second Part of John Gower's 'Tripartite Chronicle.'

Parts II. and III. of the 'Tripartite Chronicle.'

The Second Part begins with a lament for the deeds of hell to be narrated in it, and proceeds to sing how the three lords, knowing the king to be deceitful, obtained from him letters of peace,—and how, more deceitful than the Fox, he beguiled them. The king's secret anger first burst on the Swan (the Duke of Gloucester), who was seized at Plescy and conveyed to imprisonment at Calais. Then he sought to take the Horse (the Earl of Arundel), and deceived him by perjury, swearing upon the Sacred Book to his brother Thomas, Archbishop of Canterbury, that he should be free and unharmed if he came to Court. He trusted in the promise, and was taken. Nevertheless the Bear (the Earl of Warwick) did not leave London, and he was there made prisoner. At the meeting of Parliament eight appellants accused the three nobles. But the king durst not, because of the people, produce the Swan (Gloucester) before them, and, knowing him to be alive, feigned therefore that he had died in his bed. Having thus procured judgment against him in the absence of defence, he sent murderers to Calais by whom he was smothered with a feather-bed. The Horse (the Earl of Arundel) answered boldly for himself that, whatever he had done, was for the king's good, and showed the king's pardon. But he was condemned and beheaded on Tower Hill.

The Earl of Warwick, beguiled by the king with certain promise of pardon into admissions, was banished to a prison in the Isle of Man, and the king also seized his lands. Seeking other victims the king drew Lord Cobham from a Carthusian monastery, and banished him; banishing also, and stripping of his goods, Thomas Arundel, Archbishop of Canterbury, the friend and patron to whom Gower afterwards dedicated his 'Vox Clamantis.' None then dared speak well of the king's victims, and their enemies mocked and reviled them. They would, said they, the Swan had moulted and the Horse were galled, and the Bear chained. The second or infernal part of the Chronicle ends then with Gower's praise of Gloucester and of Arundel, lately victorious over the French at sea.

The third or heavenly part begins with a joyous strain. Then it shows how Richard lost his crown by undermining the power of the Parliament, and making himself sole authority by help of special papal bulls, by the issue of blank charters for the despoiling of the people, and by the banishment of Henry Earl of Derby, son and heir of John of Gaunt. The death of John of Gaunt caused Henry to be invited into England to claim his inheritance, and he was urged thereto by Thomas Arundel of Canterbury, and Thomas, son and heir of Richard Earl of Arundel. Henry, therefore, as the new Duke of Lancaster, landed at Grimsby, where his first act was to kneel in prayer on the English shore. Henry's coming was hailed joyfully throughout the kingdom. King Richard was then wasting time in Ireland. Bristol was taken, and there three of the king's abettors were beheaded. Richard returned from Ireland into Wales, surrendered himself, and in August entered London with Henry. There he was placed under arrest in the Tower. Banished lords were recalled, a Parliament was summoned for the next Michaelmas. There is a lament of Gower's for the death of Humphrey, son and heir of the Duke of Gloucester, and of the youth's widowed mother. [It was after this that Henry of Lancaster assumed the honoured badge of the Swan, identified with maintenance of public right.] On the first day of the assembling of Parliament Richard resigned his crown, and Henry became king by threefold right of accession, election, and a bloodless conquest. The Chronicle tells of the continuance of the Parliament until after the coronation, and of the confirmation of the laws passed under the influence of Gloucester and his party. Richard was judicially condemned, but he and the other accused were left in peace, till the conspiracy of the Earls of Huntingdon, Kent, Salisbury, and Lord Spencer, defeated by the people of Cirencester, brought them to the scaffold. At this news Richard saddened and wept, and took no longer food enough to support life; of which privation he died. He was buried at Langley in Herefordshire. Thus having shown how King Henry IV. came to the throne, Gower speaking of Richard and Henry by their initials, ends the 'Tripartite Chronicle' with a vivid contrast between the characters of R. and H., and holds up, as a warning to bad rulers, the end of Richard. *Qualis erat vita, Chronica stabit ita.*

These were the thoughts of Gower's age when the blind poet, still zealous in love for England and the right, had new faith in the future of his country, and pleasantly collected trifles of his

youth to entertain a court in which he trusted. There was an interval of sixteen years or more between the writing of the 'Vox Clamantis' and the addition of its most natural sequel, the 'Tripartite Chronicle.' In that earlier work, though written with vigour and ease in Latin, the language of literature which alone then seemed to be lasting, John Gower spoke especially and most essentially the English mind. To this day we hear among our living countrymen, as was to be heard in Gower's time and long before, the voice passing from man to man that, in spite of admixture with the thousand defects incident to human character, sustains the keynote of our literature, and speaks from the soul of our history the secret of our national success. It is the voice that expresses the persistent instinct of the English mind to find out what is unjust among us and undo it, to find out duty to be done and do it, as God's bidding. We twist religion into many a mistaken form. With thought free and opinions manifold we have run through many a trial of excess and of its answering reaction. In battle for main principles we have worked on through political and social conflicts in which often, no doubt, unworthy men rising to prominence have misused for a short time dishonest influence. But there has been no real check to the great current of national thought, the stream from which the long line of our English writers, like the trees by the fertile river-bank, derive their health and strength. We have seen how persistently that slow and earnest English labour towards God and the right was maintained for six centuries before the time of Chaucer, from the day when Cædmon struck the first note of our strain of English song with the words: "For us it is very right that we praise with our words, love in minds, the Keeper of the Heavens, Glory King of Hosts." It was the old spirit still in Chaucer's time that worked in the 'Vision of Piers Plowman,' and spoke through the Voice of Gower as of one crying in the wilderness, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord." It needed not in those days that a man should be a Wicliffite to see the griefs of the Church and people, and to trace them to their root in duties unperformed. Gower's name is a native one, possibly Cymric, but derived probably in or near Kent, from the old Saxon word for marsh-country, of which there was much about the Thames mouth,

Gyrwa-land. His genius is unmixed Anglo-Saxon, closely allied to that of the literature before the conquest, in the simple earnestness of a didactic manner leavened by no bold originality of fancy. In his Latin verse Gower writes easily, and, having his soul in his theme, forcibly. But he tells that which he knows, and invents rarely. His few inventions also, as of the dream of transformed beasts that represent Wat Tyler's rabble, of the ship of the state at sea, of his landing at an island full of turmoil which an old man described to him as Britain, are contrivances wanting in the subtlety and the audacity of true imaginative genius. He does not see as he writes, and so write that all they who read see with him. But in his own old English or Anglo-Saxon way, he tries to put his soul into his work. Thus, in the 'Vox Clamantis' we have heard him asking that the soul of his book, not its form, be looked to; and speaking the truest English in such sentences as that "the eye is blind and the ear deaf, that convey nothing down to the heart's depth; and the heart that does not utter what it knows is as a live coal under ashes. If I know little, there may be another whom that little will help. Poor, I give of my scanty score, for I would rather be of small use than of none. But to the man who believes in God no power is unattainable if he but rightly feels his work; he ever has enough whom God increases." This is the old spirit of Cædmon and of Bede, in which are laid, while the earth lasts, the strong foundations of our literature. It was the strength of such a temper in him that made Gower strong. "God knows," he says again, "my wish is to be useful; that is the prayer that directs my labour." And while he thus touches the root of his country's philosophy, the form of his prayer that what he has written may be what he would wish it to be, is still a thoroughly sound definition of good English writing. His prayer is that there may be no word of untruth, and that "each word may answer to the thing it speaks of, pleasantly and fitly; that he may flatter in it no one, and seek in it no praise above the praise of God. Give me," he asks, "that there shall be less vice and more virtue for my speaking."

It was the strength of this aspiration shown in the 'Vox Clamantis,' that caused Chaucer in his 'Troilus and Cressida'—before Gower's English Poem had appeared—to give to his

friend the epithet, that his countrymen agreed thereafter in fastening upon him, as "the moral Gower."

Gower's English Poem, the 'Confessio Amantis,' or 'Lover's Confession,' abounds in tales connected by a story in the way made popular by the Decameron. But while professing to amuse the idle with discourse of love, it is as earnest as it could be made by a writer hampered with the working of a fashionable piece of intellectual machinery for which, writing also when aged and in ill-health, he did not really care. To the best of his power Gower uses the device of this poem as a sort of earth-work, from behind which he sets himself the task of digging and springing a mine under each of the Seven Deadly Sins. There are a prologue and eight books. The Prologue repeats briefly the Cry of the 'Vox Clamantis.' The Eight Books are, one for each of the seven deadly sins, with one interpolated book, seventh in the series, which rhymes into English a 'Tresor' of the physical and political science and philosophy of the time, from the 'Secretum Secretorum,' that includes an argument, applied covertly to Richard, on the state and duties of a king.

Confessio Amantis: a Lover's Confession.

The Prologue, since

"sothe it is

That who that al of wisdom writ,
It dulleth ofte a mannes wit,"

says for the poet—

"I woldë go the middel wey,
And write a boke betwene the twey,
Somewhat of lust, somewhat of lore,
That of the lesse or of the more
Som man may like of what I write;
And that for fewë men endite
In our Englisshe—"

Here is the point of departure for a significant change made, after the lapse of a few years, by Gower himself in the reading of the text. At first¹ he thus told of the origin and consequent first dedication of the book:

"And that for fewë men endite
In our Englisshe, I thenkë make
A bokë for King Richardes sake,

¹ MS. Harl. 3490.

To whom belongeth my legeaunce
 With all min hertës obeisaunce.
 In Themsë, whan it was flowend,
 As I by botë came rowend,
 So as fortune her timë sette
 My legë lord perchaunce I mette,
 And so befel as I came nigh
 Out of my bote, whan he me sigh,¹
 He bad me come into his barge;
 And whan I was with him at large,
 Amongës other thingës said
 He hath this charge upon me laid,
 And bad me do my besinesse,
 That to his highë worthynesse
 Some newë thing I shuldë boke
 That he himself it mightë loke
 After the forme of my writìng.
 And thus upon his commaundìng,
 Min herte is wel the morë glad
 To writë so as he me bade."

He the less fears detraction. A gentle heart seeks only to praise that which is to be praised. But though the world is wild and full of jangling, he shall hope to deserve the king's thanks by observing his will. A king is not to be refused; and

"Though I sikenesse have upon honde,
 And longe have had, yet woll I fonde,
 So as I madë my beheste,
 To make a boke after his heste,
 And write in such a manner wise
 Which may be wisdom to the wise,
 And play to hem that list to play."

So Gower wrote when the king, having declared himself of age, was, for a few years in wholesome fear of his people, ruling with a discretion that made it the duty of good patriots to keep their doubts in abeyance, and hope yet for a good issue to the unsettled youth of the Black Prince's son. Afterwards, when that hope had departed, Gower, still in King Richard's time, expunged the dedication to the king, and offered his poem to the head of the party which then comprised nearly all Englishmen who loved their country, and desired to see abatement of its suffering. Thus stood the dedication in its altered form:²

"I thenkë make
 A bokë for Englandës sake
 The yere sixtenthe of King Richàrd;
 What shall befalle here afterward,
 God wote"

¹ Saw. The form always used by Gower.

² MSS. Harl. 7184, 3869.

Thus I, which am a borel¹ clerke,
 Purposè for to write a boke
 After the worlde that whilom toke,
 Long time in oldè daiës passed ;
 But for men sain it is now lassed
 In worsè plight than it was tho,
 I thenkè for to touch also
 The world which neweth every day,
 So as I can, so as I may.
 Though I sickennesse have upon honde,
 And longe have had, yet wol I fonde,
 To write and do my bessinese,
 That in some part so as I gesse,
 The wisè man may ben advised.
 For this Prologue is so assised,
 That it to Wisdom all belongeth ;
 Whan the Prologue is so dispended,
 This boke shall afterwards ben ended
 Of love

.
 This boke, upon amendement,
 To stonde at his commaundement
 With whom min herte is of accorde,
 I send unto min ownè lorde,
 Which of Lancastre is Henry named.
 The highè God him hath proclaimed
 Full of knighthood and allè grace.
 So wol I now this werke embrace
 With hol truste and with hol beleve,
 God graunte I mote it wel acheve."

The Prologue, as the poet says, to wisdom all belongeth. When that is done, the book shall be of love. In the Prologue, therefore, he looks back to past times, when Righteousness and Peace kissed each other, from days when, he says, men see the sore without the salve. In the prevailing strife none wots who has the worse. May God again send love and peace between the lands. The simple patience, humility, and charity of the old steersman of Peter's barge are gone. Now we have vainglory and Simony. "The heven is fer, the worlde is nigh." The church key has been turned into a sword ; the holy prayer into cursing. There are still many "who serve in the church only for Christ's sake," and these do good ; while in the seat of Moses sit the Scribe and Pharisee. With the second Pope at Avignon, "betwen two stolës is the fall." The sloth, excess and pride that caused the schism,

"causeth for to bringe
 This newë sect of Lollardie,
 And also many an heresie,

¹ Rustic, lay. From old French, borel, "burel, coarse cloth made of the undyed wool of brown sheep, the ordinary dress of the lower orders, as it still is in parts of Savoy and Switzerland." 'Wedgwood's Dict. of English Etymology.'

Among the clerkës in hem selve.
 It werë better dike and delve,
 And stonde upon the rightë feith,
 Than knowe al that the Bible saith
 And erre as somë clerkës do.
 Upon the hond to were a sho,
 And set upon the foot a glove
 Accordeth nought to the behove,
 Of resonable mannës use."

Divers lands dispute over the Papacy, but when God will, the struggle shall wear out; for truth shall stand at last. This clerk saith yea, that other nay, and thus they drivë forth the day; but for the general cause of the church none cares. And thus the right hath no defence—

"But there I lovë, there I holde.
 Lo! thus to-broke is Cristës folde;
 Wherof the flock withoutë guide,
 Devoured is on every side."

The shepherds hurt where they should heal,

"And what sheep that is full of wulle
 Upon his backe, they toose¹ and pulle,
 While there is anything to pile.²
 Lo! how they feignen chalk for chese!
 For though they speke and techë wel,
 They don hem self therof no dele;³
 For if the wolf come in the wey,
 Their gostly staf is then away
 Wherof they shulde her⁴ flock defende,
 But if the pouer sheep offende
 In any thing, though it be lite,
 They ben al redy for to smite.
 And thus howe ever that they tale⁵
 The strokës fall upon the smale,
 And upon other that bene greate
 Hem lacketh hertë for to beate."

They preach almsgiving and penance, abstinence and chastity,

"But plainly for to speke of that,
 I not⁶ how thilke body fat,

¹ Now touse. From A.-S. *tæsan*, to pluck or gather.

² Fr. *piller* to rob. To pile, or pill, was used in the sense of fleecing or skinning, whence peel, as to peel fruit, &c.

³ Part. A.-S. *dæl*, as in "a great deal," *i.e.*, a great part.

⁴ Her, like its original the A.-S. *hire*, means both her and their, hem, them.

⁵ Blame. From A.-S. *tælan*, to speak ill of, censure; the noun is *tál*, *tálu*, reproach. Not the "tale" that is from *talian*, to reckon, noun *tal*, a number.

⁶ Know not. A.-S. *witan*, to know; *nitan*, not to know. Wot. Not.

Which they with deinté metës kepe,
 And lein it softë for to slepe;
 Whan it hath elles of his wille
 With chastité shall stonde stille."

But Gower, as we have seen, is careful not to confound all the clergy in the censure of the bad:

"The vice of hem that ben ungood,
 Is no reproof unto the good.
 For every man his ownë werkes
 Shall beare, and thus as of the clerkes,
 The godë men ben to commende;
 And all these other god amende!"

Turning, then, from the clergy to the people, and the common clamour in all lands, "how that the worlde is al miswent;" which some ascribe to fortune, some to the stars; Gower repeats his teaching that no blind Fate governs the affairs of men, but

"that the man is over al
 His ownë cause of wele and wo.
 That we Fortünë clepë so,
 Out of the man himself it groweth."

And this leads to a repetition in his English verse of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, and the interpretation of it. From the time signified by the golden head of the image, they had come down to the time signified by the feet of clay and iron:—

"Of bras, of silver, and of golde,
 The worlde is passëd and agone;
 And nowë upon his oldë tone,¹
 It stant of brutal erthe and steel,
 The whiche accorden never a dele.²
 The apostel writ unto us alle,
 And saith, that upon us is falle
 Thend of the world, so may we knowe
 This ymage is nigh overthrow."

We see on every side general wars among the Christians; and yet the clergy preach that there is no good deed which stands not upon Charity.

"I not how charity may stonde
 Where dedly werre is taken on honde."

The whole world about him images the passions and the strife of man. Death comes of the division in his nature "of cold, of hot, of moist, of drie." If he were engendered of one matter, there would be no corruption. His body and soul, too, are so divided, that what one loves the other hates. Division brought the flood upon the world. The sin of

¹ Toes. The A.-S. would be tán.

² Not a bit.

them who built the tower of Babel was punished with division of tongues. Sin is the mother of division.

“ In heven is pees and all accorde,
But helle is full of such discorde
That there may be no lovë day.
Forthy good is while a man may
Echone to settë pees with other,
And loven as his ounë brother ;
So may he winnë worldës welthe,
And afterwarde his soulë helthe.”

The poet ends his Prologue, that belongs to Wisdom, with a Would God that now were another such as Arion, who tamed the wild beasts with his music, to put away melancholy and set love between the lords and commons! There would be use in many a place for his harping, to make peace where now is hate.

“ But when the sharpnesse of the spore
The horsë sidë smit too sore,
It greveth ofte. And now no more
As for to speke of this matere,
Which none but only God may stere.”

Here ends the Prologue, from the front of Gower's English poem a faint echo of the warning cry he had sent forth in the *Vox Clamantis*. The Prologue, that belongs to Wisdom, being thus dispended, comes the theme of Love,

“ Which may be wisdom to the wise,
And play to hem that list to play.”

But, after all, Love in this poem serves but as the sugar to coat seven pills against the Seven Deadly Sins, and a bolus of instruction in philosophy and the right discipline of kings.

BOOK I. of the 'Confessio Amantis' begins as with a sigh. The poet cannot reach his hand to heaven and set right the balance of the world; henceforth, therefore, he will treat of love whose law is out of rule. Love is unreasonable, and to prove it so, he will tell how Love and he together met. On a day in May he feigns that he went to the woods; not to sing with the birds, for when he had found a sweet green plain in the forest there he complained, wished, wept, threw himself on the ground, looked up and called for pity upon Cupid and Venus. Then he saw both the King and Queen of Love. Cupid went by him with wrathful averted eyes, but sent through his heart a fiery dart before he passed away. Venus spoke to him, but with no goodly cheer. He told her that he was a man of hers, who had long served in her court, and deserved some weal after long woe. He would, at her bidding, tell her of his sickness, if he could live long enough to do so. If he lived, she said, her will was that he first be shriven by her priest; and she called to Genius, her own clerk (as appointed in the 'Roman de la Rose'), to come

forth and hear this man's shrift. Then the poet uplifted his head and saw that priest of hers ready to hear his Confession.

First greeting him with "Benedicite," like a confessor of the church, Genius bade the lover plainly tell what had befallen. The lover fell on his knees, and with devotion and contrition begged of Dominus his holy father Genius, as he was himself disturbed at heart and had his wits greatly astray, that he would oppose, or put before him, the several points of his shrift, that there might be nothing forgotten. He was, in fact, to put, according to the system of the confessional, his searching questions,¹ and make an exhaustive examination of the Lover's state. That, said Genius, was the duty assigned to him as the Priest of Love. But as a Priest he must speak not only of Love, but also of other things that touch the cause of Vice. He would forbear nothing of his office, but show each of the vices, that the lover might consider how far any of them touched the matter of his love. The Confession begins, therefore, in due form, with questions as to the lover's use of his five senses, especially of sight and hearing.

And now the setting is made ready for the ring of stories wherewith it is the main purpose of the 'Confessio Amantis' to follow, in the way prescribed by Gower's own taste in design, the fashion set by the 'Decameron.' The tales are closely set, connected throughout, sometimes skilfully and sometimes with an obvious strain of ingenuity, by passages of dialogue between the Confessor and the Lover whom he systematically questions. When the dialogue is long, it is encrusted with brief anecdotes or allusions to history and fable. Genius, the Confessor, illustrates every vice that he inquires about with a tale or with tales showing its character; then asks the Lover whether he be guilty of that sort of offence. The Lover replies variously, but always in accordance with the character of a man purely devoted to the love of one fair woman who has not given him a ray of hope.

The story of Actæon, who saw Diana bathing, illustrates (from Book III. of Ovid's 'Metamorphoses') offence by the sense of sight. To this is added, also from Ovid's 'Metamorphoses' (Book IV.), the tale of Perseus and the Gorgons.

Sense of hearing. Fable of the asp that, liable to be charmed by sounds for the winning of the carbuncle it wears on its head, lays its ear flat on the ground to shut out the fatal music. (This fable is to be found in lib. xii. cap. iv. sec. 12 of the Etymologie of St. Isidore of Seville, who died A.D. 636.) Story of Ulysses, who stopped the ears of his fellow-voyagers that they might not hear the fatal songs of the Sirens. Gower got the Troy stories—current knowledge in his day—from Guido Colonna's Latin poem afterwards translated by Lydgate, from Joseph of Exeter's poem, founded on the Troy Book of Dares Phrygius, from the Geste de Troie of Benoit de St. Maure, and other versions.

Having discussed these topics, the Confessor calls his son's attention to the "deadly vices seven." The first of them is—

¹ In the first tale of the Decameron, there is a Confessor thus taking the sins in turn for a hypocritical rogue, who means to die in the odour of sanctity.

Pride, which has five ministers—

1. Hypocrisy. In explaining the nature of this to the Lover, Genius speaks Gower's mind upon hypocrites, religious, ecclesiastical, and secular. In love there is the hypocrite who lies in wait to deceive innocent women. Story of the Roman wife, Paulina, whom Duke Mundus deceived through her piety, by visiting her in the temple of Isis, with connivance of false priests, as the god Anubis. (Josephus, *Antiq.* lib. xviii. cap. iii. Many later stories were of this type. Boccaccio's second novel of the fourth day, in which a Friar, Albert, personates the angel Gabriel, is one of them.) Story of the Trojan Horse.

2. Disobedience. Story of the good knight Florentius, who, having slain Branchus, was condemned to death, unless he could, within a certain time, answer a question put him by the dead man's grandmother; her question being, what do all women most desire? He was returning to his death, when he met a loathly old woman in a forest, who offered to save his life if he would marry her. He agreed, and by her teaching rightly answered, that what women most desire is sovereignty of man's love. This saving his life, he keeps, with loathing, his knightly word, marries the hag secretly, and finds her at night a lovely maid. She bids him choose whether he will have her to be fair by day or by night; he shall not have both. He wills that she be his mistress, and do as she lists. By which act of full trust and obedience he breaks the spell which was to keep her bewitched until she had won the love and sovereignty of a knight surpassing others in good name. Thus by his obedience Florentius won a perfect bride. (Used by Chaucer as the 'Wife of Bath's Tale'.)

3. Presumption. In which, says the Confessor of the Lover,

"Full oft he heweth up so highe,
That chippis fallen in his eye."

Story of the proud knight Capaneus, who, before Thebes, was struck dead with fiery thunder from the sky. (From the 'Thebaid' of Statius, where this incident closes the tenth book.) Story of an old king of Hungary, who, riding out on a May day in pleasurable state, leapt from his chariot to kiss, before his lords, the feet and hands of two faded and dry old pilgrims, with beards white "as a bushe which is besnewed." He gave them also of his good. When he returned to his chariot, there was private murmur among the great lords, and the king's brother took on himself to rebuke him for having brought shame on his estate by humbling himself to such poor wretches. The king answered courteously that this fault should be amended, and considered how he should correct his brother. It was a custom in that land, when judgment of death without hope of release was given against any lord, to blow at night before the gate of the condemned man a brazen trumpet, called the Trump of Death. The king ordered the trumpet to be blown before his brother's gate that night. Thereby he knew that he would surely die, and in great terror next day he and his wife and five children came before the king as humble suppliants, naked but for their smocks and shirts, to beseech pardon. The king, feigning that he knew nothing of it, asked his brother what his trouble was? He had heard, said the

suppliant, the Trump of Death. "Ah, fool!" said the king, "of so little faith that, at a trumpet's sound, thou hast gone stripped with wife and children through the town, in doubt of death that stands under the law of man, and that man may withdraw! Can you marvel now that I alighted from my chariot at sight of those in whose great age I saw the image of my own death which God had appointed by a law of nature that cannot be set aside?"

Forthy, my brother, after this
I rede, that sithen so it is
That thou canst drede a man so sore,
Drede God with all thin hertë more.
For all shall deie and all shall passe,
As well a leon as an asse,
As well a beggar as a lorde."

So the king taught his brother, and forgave him all. (This story is from the 'Speculum Historiale' of Vincent of Beauvais, or from its original in Damascenus's 'Romance of Barlaam and Josaphat.' A version of it, omitting the old pilgrims, and with some other changes is to be found also in the 'Gesta Romanorum,' Swan's Translation, vol. ii. Tale xliii.) The Confessor adds, from the third book of Ovid's 'Metamorphoses,' as another illustration of Presumptuous Pride, the story of Narcissus.

4. Boasting. Story of Alboin, first king of the Lombards, who slew Gurmund, made a drinking-cup of his skull, and married his daughter, Rosmunda. But upon his boasting one day publicly, when she had drunk not knowing what cup it was, that he had made her drink with her father, out of her slain father's skull, she became his enemy, and gave herself to her maid Gloderide's proud bachelor, Helmegius, the king's butler, to procure the murder of her husband. After the murder, she fled to Ravenna, where the Duke, when he had heard of her crime, poisoned her. (This story is from Part xvii. of the 'Pantheon,' written in and after A.D. 1186, by Godfrey of Viterbo, chaplain and notary to Frederick I. and Henry IV., who tells it partly in prose and partly in heroic verse.)

5. Vainglory. Common in the lover, who is over-confident, and fresh, and gay.

"And eke he can carolles make
Roundel, balade and virelay."

Story of Nebuchadnezzar.

The book then ends with a story generally summing up the character of Pride. Alonzo, a young and wise king, jealous of the rival wit of Don Pedro, one of his knights, declared that he would take his goods and his head, unless he could answer, in three weeks, these three questions: What thing hath least need, and yet men help it most? What is worth most and costs least? What costs most and is worth least, and brings only loss? The knight went home and despaired of answering, but his clever daughter, Petronella, persuaded him to tell her his trouble, and then to intrust to her the responsibility of answering the questions. On the appointed day she went with her father to court, where he staked

his life upon her answers. She said, then, that it is the Earth that hath least need, and which men help the most. Man's hand doth what he may to make it rich, although itself hath all it needs. For all that lives shall die and become earth; earth it was and earth shall be again. That which is worth most and costs least to keep is, said the wise daughter, Humility. That which is worth least and costs most, is Pride. For pride, Lucifer lost Heaven and Adam Paradise. Pride is the head of all sin. The king not only accepted these right answers, but told the maiden that if her father were one of his peers instead of a bachelor, sure as he had a life she then should be his wife. But to her father he gave an earldom with rent and land; whereupon the quick-witted maiden knelt and begged the king to be true to his word, that he would marry her if but her father were his peer; she was an earl's daughter now. The young king, who saw her beauty and her wit, agreed to marry her. So with a general lesson against Pride and in commendation of Humility, the Confessor ends that part of his examination of the Lover's conscience.

Book II. contains the questioning of the Confessor touching *Envy*, which is the second of the Deadly Sins. The Lover, apart from his lady, envies nobody; but he cannot bear to see another glad with her. Confessor illustrates—

1. The envy of those who grudge others pleasures they cannot themselves attain, by the story of Acis and Galatea and the fatal envy of Polyphemus. (Ov. Met. bk. xiii.)

2. The reverse of this; gladness at grief of others; by the story of Jupiter's sending an angel down to look to the complaints of men. The angel overtook two travellers, and when, by discourse, he found that one was covetous, the other envious, he told them, at parting, that he was a heavenly messenger who, in return for their fellowship, would give to one of them whatever gift he chose to ask for, and to his companion the same gift doubled. The covetous man urged his companion to ask first, and be the chooser of the gift; for himself he desired double share of whatever wealth was sought. The envious man, compelled to ask first, although he might have what he would, yet envied his neighbour's double share. He prayed, therefore, that he might have one blind eye, so that his comrade should be made blind altogether. And he laughed at his neighbour's weeping when the prayer was granted. (From the Fables of Avian, where Phoebus is the heavenly messenger whom Jupiter sends down.)

3. Detraction, which is as the shard beetle that neglects the flowers to settle upon filth. Story of the pious Constance, only daughter of the Roman Emperor, Tiberius Constantine. She converted people of Barbary and married the Sultan on condition that he should become a Christian. The Sultan's envious mother, having massacred the guests, and her son also, at the marriage feast, sent Constance to sea in a rudderless ship, which was driven to Northumberland, and came to rest under a royal castle upon the banks of the Humber. Elda, his chamberlain, lived there as castellan for the Saxon heathen king Allee. Elda and his wife, Hermegild, took Constance out of the ship, and Hermegild was made by her so good a Christian that she gave sight to a blind man. Elda went to report of Constance to his unmarried king, and, while he was gone,

an envious knight, who sought vainly to win the pious lady, cut the throat of Hermegild, and put the bloody knife under the bed of Constance. Elda, returning at night, found his wife murdered in her bed. The false knight accused Constance. Elda doubted. The false knight swore upon a book, at which his eyes fell out of his head, and a voice was heard saying that this was God's judgment on him for slander. He confessed the truth, and died in doing so. But Constance was married to the king, after he had been christened by Bishop Lucius, who came out of Wales from Bangor. While the king was away, warring with the Scots, Constance became the mother of a son, who was baptized Maurice. A messenger was sent with the news, who slept on the road at Knaresborough, where another envious queen-mother, between Constance and her husband, secretly changed the letters carried by the messenger. The changed letters told the king that his wife was a fairy, and his child a misbegotten monster. He wrote, in reply, that nothing should be done till his return. But at Knaresborough the letters were again changed, and the messenger took back false orders to send mother and child adrift again upon the sea. With grief this order was obeyed.

“ And tho she toke her childe in honde,
And yaf it souke, and ever amonge
She wept, and otherwhilē songe
To rockē with her childe aslepe.”

The ship stayed its course under the wall of a Spanish castle, where the steward, who was a false knight, sought to do her harm, and was miraculously drowned. The wind then sent her on, and blew her ship into the midst of a great navy, where it stopped under the chief vessel of the fleet. In this ship was the commander of the fleet, Salustes, a Roman senator, whose wife, Helen, was Constance's cousin. The pious lady being discovered in the drifted vessel with her child, told little of her story. She said that her name was Custe.

“ For Custe in Saxon is to saine
Constānce upon the word Romaine.”

Salustes and his wife cherished in their household the unknown lady and her child. Meanwhile King Allee, having returned home, discovered how he had been deceived, and caused his mother to be burnt before his eyes. Some time afterwards he went on pilgrimage to Pope Pelagius, at Rome, where Constance, still keeping her counsel, caused her son, Maurice, the image of herself, to wait upon his father at a feast. So the last discoveries began, and Constance, reunited to her husband, made herself known also to the Emperor, her father, to whose throne Maurice, the most Christian of emperors, succeeded. Chaucer took this story for his 'Man of Lawes Tale,' which he founded upon Gower. In the 'Speculum Historiale' of Vincent of Beauvais is a story of miraculous preservation allied to this, and including the incident of the bloody knife. Among the Cotton MSS.,¹ Mr. Tyrwhitt² has pointed out an old English

¹ Caligula, A. ii. fol. 69.

² Introductory Discourse to the 'Canterbury Tales.'

rhyme, called Emare, with a story closely resembling this, which is said to be—

“on of Brytayne layes
That was used by olde dayes.”

Story of Demetrius and Perseus, sons of Philip of Macedon. The envious Perseus, by false witness to his father, procured his brother's death. Then he rebelled also against his father, until Philip died of sorrow, and false Perseus was king. After some time the Consul, Paulius Æmilius, left Rome to march against him. As Æmilius was leaving, his young daughter came to him weeping, because Perseus was dead. But Perseus was the name of the child's little dog. The soldier took this as an omen of the other dog's death,

“For as it is an houndës kinde
To berke upon a man behinde.”

In that war Perseus was taken and starved in his prison; he died like a dog. (The treachery of Perseus to his brother is in the *Epitome of Trogus Pompeius*, by Justinus, lib. xxxii. cap. ii. The anecdote of the dog in *Valerius Maximus de Dictis et Factis Memorabilibus*, lib. i. cap. v. sect. Rom. 3.)

4. Dissimulation is represented by the Lover's Confessor as the next form of envy. The home of dissimulation, he says, is

“With hem that dwelle among us here,
Of such as we Lumbardës calle,
For they ben the sliest of alle,
So as men sain in toune about,
To feign and sheuë thing without,
Which is revers to that withinne,
Whereof that they full oftë winne
Whan they by reson shuldë lose.”

Story of Hercules and Dejanira and the dissimulation of Nessus. (Ovid, *Heroides*, Ep. ix.; *Metamorphoses*, bk. ix.)

5. Supplantation. Agamemnon's taking of Briseis from Achilles. (Geste of Troy.) Supplanting of Troilus with Cressida by Diomedes. (Chaucer.) Story of Amphitryon's personating Geta with Alcmene. Story of the son of a Roman Emperor in times of peace, who besought leave of his father to go to the wars, and went to Cairo, where he fought for the Sultan of Persia against the Caliph of Egypt. On the eve of a great battle, the Sultan took a gold ring of his daughter's, and made her swear that, if he fell in the battle, she would marry the man by whom he sent to her that ring. In the battle the young Roman knight did wonders, and the Sultan, mortally wounded by an arrow, gave to him, as to the worthiest man, the ring to deliver. But the young knight's false bachelor, knowing of that, stole the ring while his master slept, and made haste to supplant him. The bachelor married the princess, and mounted the throne. The knight, his master, died of grief. But the truth becoming known, the Romans came and took the supplanting traitor prisoner from Persia, to be justly punished. Story of Pope

Boniface, who supplanted Celestine by teaching a clerk to blow through a trumpet in the wall when Pope Celestine was a-bed, and bid him leave his papacy. Also the sad end of Boniface, the proud clerk, misleader of the papacy, who, being imprisoned in a tower, ate his hands for hunger. (Perhaps from an apocryphal history of Boniface.) The deaths of Abner and Achitophel.

The book ends by contrasting the virtue of charity with the vice of envy in the story of Constantine, Emperor of Rome, who, when he had a leprous face, was ordered by his physician to bathe it in the blood of children under seven years old. The little ones were, therefore, collected in the palace court; but the weeping of the mothers over their sucking children, and the crying of the young babies, moved Constantine's heart. He would not spill so much blood for himself alone, and sent the mothers home with their children, and with gifts in recompense for their distresses. Then Saint Peter and Saint Paul appeared to him in his sleep, and bade him send to Mount Celion for Sylvester and his clergy, fled thither in dread of him, and learn of them the sure cure for his leprosy. Sylvester came and preached, and the vessel made to contain children's blood being filled with clear water from the well, Constantine was baptized therein, and his leprosy fell from him as fishes' scales. In memory of this, Constantine

“ Withinnë Rome anone let founde
Two churches, whichë he did make
For Peter and for Poulës sake,
Of whom he hadde a visiön,
And yaf therto possession
Of lordship and of worldës good.
But how so that his will was good
Toward the Pope and his fraunchise,
Yet hath it provëd otherwise
To se the worching of the dede.
For in croniquë thus I rede :
Anone as he hath made the yefte,
A vois was herde on high the lefte [air],
Of which all Romë was adradde,
And said, This day is venim shadde
In holy chirche of temporell,
Which medleth with the spirituëll.”

Gower took this story from Vincent of Beauvais ('Speculum Historiale,' lib. xiii. cap. 47, 48). Godfrey of Viterbo does not tell it, but refers to it as apocryphal, because it is not to be found in any authentic books or chronicles.

BOOK III.—Of *Anger* in its five forms.

1. Melancholy. Story of King Æolus, who had two children, Macareus and Canace. Their love became illicit, and their father falling thereby into melancholic frenzy, sent Canace a drawn sword, wherewith to kill herself. After writing a pitiful letter to Machaire, founded upon Ovid's,—

“ In my right hond my penne I hold,
And in my left my swerde I kepe,

And in my barme there lith to wepe
Thy child and min, which sobbeth fast,"¹

she kills herself, and the child rolling out of her bosom, "basketh him about" in the warm blood of his mother. The child was cast into the forest. (Ovid, *Heroides*, Ep. xi.) Confessor Genius, blaming the father, speaks indulgently of the loves of this brother and sister, and he tells from Ovid how Tiresias was changed into a woman for interfering with the course of nature in two serpents. (Ov. *Met.* bk. iii.) This, however, is the story against which the good sense of Chaucer protested in the Prologue to the *Man of Lawes Tales*, when of Chaucer himself the *Man of Lawes* is made to say,—

"But certainly no word ne writeth he
Of thilkë wicke ensample of Canace,
That loved hire owen brother sinfully :
(Of all swiche cursed stories I say fy)."

2. Chiding. Story of the patience of Socrates, who, when his wife, after long chiding, vexed at his placidity, emptied over his head the waterpot she had brought from the well, said this was very seasonable; for it was winter, and in winter-time, after the wind had been blowing hard, there usually came a downpour. Story of the strife between Jupiter and Juno when Tiresias, being made arbiter, was blinded by Juno for giving judgment against her. Stories of the crow, a white bird once, turned black for telling of a love of Phoebus; and of the nymph Laar, who was punished for betrayal of a love of Jupiter.

3. Hate. Story of King Nauplius, who wrecked the ships of the Greeks by misplacing the beacons, in revenge for the murder among them of his son Palamedes on the way home from Troy. (*Geste of Troy*.)

4 and 5. Contest and Homicide. Story of Diogenes and Alexander (*Val. Max. lib. iv. cap. iii. sect. ext. 4*). Story of Pyramus and Thisbe (*Ov. Met. bk. iv.*). Story of Phoebus and Daphne (*Ov. Met. bk. i.*). Story of Demophon and Acamas, who, being rejected by their subjects when they returned from Troy, designed utter destruction of the rebels, until Nestor asked how they meant to be kings in a land where there were no people. Story of Orestes (*Ovid, Heroides, Ep. viii.*). Story of Alexander and the sea-robber who claimed to be only a poor double of himself. (*'Gesta Romanorum,' Swan's Tr., vol. ii. Tale lxvi.,* quoted from Augustine *'De Civitate Dei.'*) The argument here, as in many other parts of the poem, and in the verse of Gower generally, is earnest against warfare. It strongly illustrates the condition of England at the time when the lover is bidden

"loke on every side
Er that thou falle on homicide,
Which sinne is now so generall,
That it wel nigh stant overall

¹ Gower's version of

"*Dextra tenet calamum; strictum tenet altera ferrum,
Et jacet in gremio charta soluta meo.*"

In holy chirche and ellës where.
 But all the while it is so there,
 The world mot nedë fare amis.
 For whan the well of pitë is,
 Through covetise of worldës good,
 Defoulëd with shedding of blood,
 The remenaunte of folke about
 Unnethë stonden in any doubt
 To werre eche other and to slee,
 So it is all nought worth a stre,
 The charitë whereof we prechen,
 For we do no thing as we techen."

Solinus (not, I think, in any printed copies of the Polyhistor) tells of a bird of prey with a man's face, that after feasting on man's flesh, if it see its own face in a well, the image of that which it has slain, it grieves so that it is dead by the morrow. Story of the reward of Telaphus, son of Achilles, for the mercy he had shown to Teucer (Geste of Troy).

Book IV. *Sloth*.—1. Delay. Delayed return of Æneas, that caused the death of Dido (Ov. Met. bk. xiv.). Delayed return of Ulysses to Penelope (Geste of Troy). "The grete clerk Grostest" made a head of brass, to tell things that befell, and by delay of half a minute lost the labour of seven years. This story, more commonly told of Grosteste's pupil and friend, Roger Bacon, was a favourite mediæval fancy. William of Malmesbury tells of a speaking head made by Pope Sylvester the Second (Gerbert). Such heads were said also to have been made by Albertus Magnus, and by Henry de Villeine, at Madrid. Stow also tells of one made at Oxford in the reign of Edward II. Parable of the wise and foolish virgins.

2. Pusillanimity.

"For who that nought dare undertake,
 By right he shall no profit take."

Story of Pygmalion, who, by setting his heart on it, gave life to an image of stone. (Ov. Met. bk. x.) Story of the daughter of King Ligdus, whom her mother pretended to be a boy, because if her infant was a girl it would be slain. The girl, called Iphis, and reared as a boy, was married to a princess, and then, strongly wishing manhood, was by the gods changed into a man (Ov. Met. bk. ix.).

3. Forgetfulness. Story of Phyllis at Rhodope, with whom Demophon stayed on his way to Troy, and who, after his departure, hanged herself because he forgot to return; whereupon the gods changed her into a nut-tree, which is to this day called, after Phyllis philliberd, filbert (Ovid, Heroides, Ep. ii.) Chaucer tells this story at length in the Legend of Good Women, and Gower had read in the same poem his friend's version of other tales that he now tells again, as Pyramus and Thisbe, Medea, Ariadne, Tereus, Tarquin and Lucrece.

4. Negligence.

"Whan he the thing may nought amende,
 Than is he ware and saith at ende :

Ha, woldë God I haddë knowe !
 Wherof bejapëd with a mowe
 He goth, for whan the gretë stede
 Is stolë, than he taketh hede,
 And maketh the stable-dorë fast."

Stories of Phaeton driving the horses of the Sun (Ov. Met. bk. ii.), and the flight of Icarus (Ov. Met. bk. viii.).

5. Idleness.

" Which secheth eses many folde.
 In winter doth he nought for colde,
 In somer may he nought for hete ;
 So wether that he frese or swete,
 Or be he in, or be he oute,
 He woll ben idel all aboute."

Story of Rosiphele, daughter of Herupus, King of Armenia, who was too idle to love until, on a May-day, coming through the park to a river-bank, and resting under the shade, the gladness of flower, bird, and beast bred quarrel between love and her own heart. Then she saw, riding along under the wood's side, a company of ladies, clothed alike in white and blue, and riding upon fair, white, ambling horses, all saddled with pearls and gold. Each looked like a queen, and Rosiphele shrank into the shade, thinking herself not worthy to ask them who they were. But there came behind a ragged woman, with twenty score and more horse-halters about her waist, who rode on a lame, lean, galled horse, wretchedly saddled, but with a bridle of gold and precious stones. She, being questioned, said that in life she was a king's daughter slow to love, wherefore now she is in rags, and rides on a lean horse behind those lusty ladies, who had been servants to love, and true to those on whom they set their hearts. She now carries their halters, and is but as their horses' knave. For a fortnight in her life she had a mind to love a knight, who died before she could fulfil her purpose, but the thought earned for her the rich bridle to her sorry nag. So having warned all

" Of lovë that they be nought idel,
 And bid hem thenke upon my bridel,"

she vanished, and Rosiphele, with her heart amended, went home vowing to herself that she would wear no halters. (This story Chaucer told in 'The Flower and the Leaf'; its source is 'The Lai du Trot,' taken from the chronicler Helinand.) Story of Jephtha's daughter, and how she bewailed for forty days that she must die unmarried.

But when the Confessor urges the Lover to shake off sloth, and tells how by deeds of arms men have earned love, the Lover replies thus, with emphatic expression of John Gower's Christian aspiration for peace and echo of Walter Map's mind on the subject of crusading: ¹

" And for to slee the hethen alle,
 I not what good there mightë falle,

¹ See Bk. I. ch. xvi.

So mochel blood though ther be shad.
 This finde I writen how Crist bad
 That no man other shuldë slee.

* * * * *

To sleen and fighten they us bidde
 Hem whom they shuld, as the boke saith,
 Converten unto Cristës feith.
 But herof have I great merveile,
 How they wol biddë me traveile.
 A Sarazin if I slee shall,
 I slee the soulë forth withall,
 And that was never Cristës lore.
 But now—ho there, I say no more."

Achilles at Troy laid his arms aside for love of Polixena. Confessor replies by telling how Nauplius forced Ulysses to quit Penelope, and go as warrior to Troy; and how Protesilaus, though his wife Laodamia predicted his death if he went, went nevertheless with the besiegers of Troy to his death; and Saul, though the witch prophesied his death, yet went to battle at Gilboa. Education of Achilles by the Centaur Chiron. How Hercules, by conquest of the giant sorcerer Achelous, won Dejanira. (Ov. Met. bk. ix.) How Penthesilea, Queen of the Amazons, went armed to the defence of Troy, her death at the hand of Pyrrhus, and burial by the King of Paphlagonia. War of Æneas against Turnus, that won not only Lavinia, but also Italy. (Ov. Met. bk. xiv.) Falling here into argument on generosity in love, Gower's Confessor adopts the doctrine of John Ball in saying,—

"And for to loke on other side,
 How that a gentil man is bore,
 Adam, which allë was to-fore,
 With Eve his wife, as of hem two,
 All was alichë gentil tho."

General praise of the industry and vigour of the ancients, with some examples of their wisdom in a digression on the origin of crafts and sciences and the three philosopher's stones: namely, the vegetable, healing all sicknesses until the hour of death; the animal, helping the five wits of man; and the mineral, which transforms baser metals into gold and silver.

6. Somnolence, sloth's chamberlain. That, says the Lover, is no vice of his. If his lady list to wake of nights for carol and dance in her chamber then he for the time hates sleep:

"And whan it falleth other gate,
 So that her likë nought to daunce,
 But on the dees to castë chaunce,
 Or axe of lovë some demaunde,
 Or ellës that her list commaunde
 To rede and here of Troilus,
 Right as she wold or so or thus,
 I am all ready to consent."

Here, among the home entertainments of a young lady in Chaucer's time,—song, dance, and dice-play,—we have the listening to one who reads from Chaucer's 'Troilus and Cressida.' Story of Ceix, King of Troezen, whose brother Dedalion was changed to a goshawk. (Ov. Met. bk. xi.) In telling this story, Gower translates effectively into his own English verse Ovid's description of the House of Sleep. Stories of Cephalus and Aurora (Ov. Met. bk. vii.), of Argus piped to sleep by Mercury (Ov. Met. bk. i.), and of Iphis, son of Teucer, King of Mysia, who hanged himself for hopeless love of Araxarethe (Anaxarete); whereat she grieved till the gods changed her into an image of stone, which was set up in a temple of Venus, and Iphis buried in a rich tomb at the foot of it. (Ov. Met. bk. xiv.)

BOOK V. Of *Avarice*. As in this poem of the deadly sins Pride takes the first place, so Avarice takes the largest space, the Book occupied by this sin being about twice as long as that taken by any one of the other six. Stories of Midas, to whom Bacchus granted that whatever his hand touched should be turned to gold (Ov. Met. bk. xi.), and of the punishment of Tantalus, which is like the pains of avarice.

1. Jealousy, the avarice of love. Story of Vulcan, Venus, and Mars. Digression from this to a general sketch of ancient mythology, with a description of the chief gods and goddesses of the Greeks.

"Now loke how they be for to blame."

Bacchus,—

"They clepèd him the god of wine,
And thus a gloton was divine."

The priest of Venus plays the Christian. He leaves Venus to the last, for shame, because he is her priest, but when he does take up her story, he gives an account of her that causes him to add, "See now the foul miscreance of Greeks." From the sketch of heathen mythology the Confessor and priest of Venus passes through the Scripture story of the Jews and the coming of Christ, to a warning of the Lover against errors of the Lollards:

"Now were it good, that thou forthy,
Which through baptismë proprely
Art unto Cristës feith professed,
Beware that thou be nought oppressed
With anticristës lollardie.
For as the Jewës prophecie
Was set of god for avauntage,
Right so this newë tapinàge
Of lollardie goèth aboute
To settë Cristës feith in doubte.
The saints, that weren us to-fore,
By whom the feith was first upbore,
That holy chirchë stood releved,
That oughten better be beleved
Than thesë, whichë that men knowe
Nought holy, though they feigne and blowe

Her lollardy in mennès ere.
 But if thou wolt live out of fere,
 Such newë lore I rede escheue,
 And hold forth right the wey and sue,
 As their auncéstrès did er this,
 So shalt thou nought beleve amis."

Thoas, priest of Minerva at Troy, corrupted with gold, turned away his eyes while the Palladium was stolen. It is so now with the prelates.

"The wardès of the chirchë key
 Through mishandlingë ben miswreint."

It was otherwise when Peter taught the Jews, Andrew the Greeks, Thomas the Indians, and Paul the Gentiles. Now Avarice rules the Church of Christ.

2. Cupidity. Story of the magic mirror set up in Rome by Virgil the Enchanter, to show the approach of enemies, destroyed by emissaries from the King of Apulia, who practised on the covetousness of Crassus, then the emperor. They took treasure, buried it in two places, and twice, by this device, appeared able to disclose to the emperor where treasure was hidden. The third time they told him that there was a far greater treasure hidden under Virgil's mirror, and that they could so prop as to dig under without disturbing it. They dug, and propped with beams, but at night set fire in the mine, and escaped. When the beams were burnt through, the magic mirror fell. The Romans punished their Emperor for his avarice by pouring molten gold into his mouth. (The magical powers of Virgil were told in the chronicle of Helinand, and by following writers, especially Gervase of Tilbury, in his 'Otia Imperialia'.)

Cupidity at Court, and its various issues to the courtier. Story of a king at whose court there was complaint of this. He took two coffers exactly alike, filled one with straw and stones, and the other with treasure. He then told the complainants what was in each, bade them choose one, and keep the one of their own choosing. Was it his fault if thereupon they confidently chose the coffer stuffed with straw? (From Boccaccio's 'Decameron' Day X., Novel i. Its oldest known source is the romance of Baarlaam and Josaphat, written in Greek about A.D. 800, by Joannes Damascenus, and incorporated by Vincent of Beauvais [A.D. 1290] in his 'Speculum Historiale'.) Similar story of Emperor Frederick, two beggars, and two pies. Story of the sordid love of a king's steward of Apulia, and how he lost his wife for ever.

3. False-witness and Perjury. Stories of Deidamia and Achilles, whom Thetis, his mother, had clothed as a maiden, of the perjury of Jason to Medea (Ov. Met. bk. vii.), and of Phryxus and Hellen. In the account of Medea's restoring youth to Jason's father, the description, from Ovid (Met. bk. vii. ll. 262-278), of the boiling of her caldron probably connects it with the witches' caldron in Macbeth :

"And eke Cimpheius, the serpènt,
 To her hath all her scalès lent;
 Chelidre her yafe her adders-skin,
 And she to boilen cast hem in ;

And parte eke of the horned oule,
 The which men here on nightes houle ;
 And of a raven which was tolde
 Of ninē hundred winter olde,
 She toke the hede, with all the bille.
 And as the medicine it wille,
 She toke her after the bowele
 Of the see wolf," &c.

4. Usury. Echo's punishment for taking usury of Jupiter's love in despite of Juno. (Ov. Met. bk. iii.)

5. Parsimony. Story of Babio, who had the love of Viola, and by niggardliness lost her to the generous young Croceus.

6. Ingratitude. Story of the poor fagot-gatherer, Bardus, who in seeking to help a Roman Senator out of a pit in the forest, saved also an ape and a serpent. The lord was ungrateful, but the ape helped the poor man to gather in his fagots, and the serpent brought him in her mouth a precious stone that, as often as he sold it, came back to his purse again. ('Gesta Romanorum,' Swan's Tr., vol. ii. Tale xxxix. Originally an Arabian tale in the Calilah-u-Dumnah, and told by Matthew Paris, under the year 1195 as a parable applied to false friends by Richard I., after his return from the East.) Story of Theseus, who ungratefully forsook Adriagne (Ariadne), and made Phædra his queen. (Ovid, Heroides, Ep. x.)

7. Violent seizure. Story of Tereus and King Pandion's daughters, Progne and Philomel. (Ov. Met. bk. vi.)

8. Robbery. Story, also from 'Ovid's Metamorphoses,' of Neptune and Cornix. Story of Jupiter and Callisto, who, being changed by Juno into a bear, had her son Arcas's bow bent against her when they were taken up into heaven as a constellation. (Ov. Met. bk. ii.) Story of the chaste Roman youth, Phirinus, who, being so fair that all women looked on him, plucked out his eyes to destroy the charm and the temptation. Story of Emperor Valentinian, who, at eighty years old, when he had subdued many provinces, accounted it his chief triumph that he had brought into subjection his own flesh.

9. Secret theft. Story of Phoebus and Leucothoe, and origin of the sunflower. (Ov. Met. bk. iii.) Here again :

"Ovide said, as I shall say,
 And in his Methamor he tolde
 A talē, which is good to holde."

Misadventure of Faunus with Hercules and Eolen sleeping apart in the cave, after exchange of clothes.

10. Sacrilege. Stories of Nebuchadnezzar and the writing on the wall ; of the theft of the gold beard, mantle, and ring from the image of Apollo in Rome (from the 'Gesta Romanorum,'¹ Swan's Tr., vol. i. Tale viii.) ; and

¹ For an account of the 'Gesta Romanorum,' and its relation to preceding collections of tales, see Bk. I. ch. xxiii.

of the abduction of Helen by Paris from the temple of Venus. The book ends with praise of largesse or liberality which keeps the right mean between prodigality and avarice.

BOOK VI. *Gluttony*. 1. Drunkenness. Story of two tuns of love-drink, sour and sweet, in Jupiter's cellar, with Cupid the blind butler, who often draws from the wrong barrel. Jupiter's answer to the prayer of Bacchus, when athirst, on the way back from his Oriental victories. Tristram drunk with love for La belle Isolde, when they had received the drink that Brangweine took them. Story of Pirithous and the Centaurs, drunk at his marriage-feast, who carried off his bride. (Ov. Met. bk. xii.) Punishment of the drunkenness of Galba and Vitellus, chiefs in Spain.

2. Delicacy or Daintiness. Delights, in love, of eye, ear, and imagination. The Lover tells the Confessor that he feeds only upon imagination; for all else he "licks honey from the thorn." Dives and Lazarus. Luxury of Nero. Drunkenness and daintiness lead to the use of witchcraft. Story of Circe and Ulysses (Geste of Troy). Of Nectanebus and King Philip's wife Olympias, and of the birth and education of Alexander. (Romance of Alexander, the Great.¹) His training in schools of philosophy gives occasion to

BOOK VII., in which—Confessor owning that

"It is nought the matere
Of lovë, why we sitten here
To shrivë, so as Venus bode,"—

—the argument upon the seven deadly sins is interrupted with a fluent summary of philosophical knowledge, chiefly a digest from the 'Secretum Secretorum,' a book falsely ascribed in the middle ages to Aristotle, and supposed to be a summary of his philosophy, which Aristotle made, late in life, for the instruction of Alexander. It is here popularised in easy verse by Gower as an outline of what Alexander learnt from Aristotle. It tells of philosophy theoretical, rhetorical, and practical, and of the steps of knowledge from theology downwards; of the elements in nature, and of the temperaments and bodily organs in man;

"All erthely thing, which God began,
Was only made to servë man,
But He the soul all onely made
Him selven for to serve and glade;"

of the three divisions of the earth; of the great ocean; of Orbis, the fifth element, the shell to the whole mundane egg; of astronomy or astrology, the seven planets and the twelve signs of the Zodiac, of the fifteen chief stars, the stone and herb of each, and their several influences. England's being governed by the moon accounts for a feature in English character, well marked before Gower's time, the love of travel:—

¹ See Bk. I. ch. xxi.

“ But what man under his powere
 Is bore, he shall his placē chaunge
 And seche many londes straunge.
 And as of this condicion
 The mones disposicion
 Upon the londe of Alemaigne
 Is set, and eke upon Britaigne,
 Which now is cleped Engelande,
 For they travaile in every londe.”

Of grammar, logic, and rhetoric; of ethics, economics, politics; and finally, as part of politics—still following the ‘*Secretum Secretorum*,’ which has for second title ‘*De Regimine Principum*,’ or as an old English translation has it, ‘*The Secret of Aristotyle, with the Governale of Princes*,’—Gower proceeds to expound the duties of a king. He tells of Diogenes and of the flatterer who had more servants than Dante,

“ For the poete of his covine
 Hath none, that woll him cloth and fede,
 But a flatrour may reule and lede
 A king with all his londe about.”

This refers to the story told by Petrarch of the value set upon a court buffoon by Can Grande, who expressed to the poet wonder that the fool pleased all, while he, the man of learning, could not do as much. “You would not wonder,” said Dante, “if you knew how friendship is founded on equality in manners and in wit.” Gower quotes sayings of kings upon flatterers, and tells of Ahab and Jehoshaphat. He illustrates the incorruptible justice that should grace a king by reference to Maximin, Fabricius, and the Samnites, a law of Emperor Conrad, and the Roman Consul Carmidotorus, who, after a long ride, inadvertently entering the Senate with his sword by his side, died upon it rather than break his own law, that decreed death to those who should come into the Senate wearing arms. He tells how Cambyses flayed an unjust judge, and nailed his skin upon the judgment-seat that was to be occupied by the offender’s son (‘*Gesta Romanorum*,’ Swan’s Tr., vol. i. Tale xxix.); and how Lycurgus, whom he calls a lawgiver of Athens, having obtained a promise that his laws should remain unchanged till his return, quitted his country and his kingdom never to come back.

Kings also should have pity. Aristotle told Alexander how between Cairo and Babylon, in summer heat, two men met as they were entering the wilderness. One said,

“ I am a Jewe, and by my lawe
 I shall to no man be felawe
 To kepe him trouthe in word ne dede.”

The other said he was a Pagan, whose law taught him to love all men alike, and to be gracious and debonnaire. The Pagan rode upon an ass, and carried wealth with him. The Jew, being afoot, as the day was hot, asked leave to ride a mile or two. But when he was on the ass, he rode off with it, and with his comrade’s wealth. The Pagan lifted his

hands humbly in appeal to Heaven, and went forth with dreary cheer. Towards night he came to a valley wherein the Jew lay slain by a lion, and his ass stood close by, whole and sound. Story told by Valerius (Maximus) of Codrus, who, being told by Apollo that in a war with the Dorians he must die, or his people be discomfited, chose to die for his people's good. (Also in 'Gesta Romanorum,' Swan's Tr., vol. i. Tale xli.) Story of Pompey's pity for the King of Armenia, his captive, when, saying it was a more goodly thing to make than to undo a king, he restored to him his rule. Stories of the tyrant Leontius, who cut off the nose and lips of Justinian (the Second), to make him unfit to reign, and himself suffered the like cruelty at the hands of Tiberius (Paulus Diaconus, *Historia Miscella*. lib. xix., xx.); of the brass bull of Perillus ('Gesta Rom.', Sw. Tr., vol. i. Tale xlvi.); of Dionysius, who fed his horses with men's flesh, and was himself given to them by Hercules; and of Lycaon, whom, for his cannibalism, Jupiter changed into a wolf. The lion spares the man who prostrates himself before his face as asking mercy. Spertachus (Cyrus), King of Persia, who killed where he conquered, warring against Thamyras, Queen of the Massagetæ, having taken her son, slew him. Afterwards he was himself taken by her in an ambush, when she drowned him in a bath made of the blood of his princes, telling him that as blood had been his delight, now he should drink his fill. (Justin, lib. i. cap. viii.; Val. Max. ix. 10, ext. 1.) But in a just cause a prince should not dread war—story of Gideon: and on fit occasion be severe; loss of the kingdom by Saul's race for the sparing of Agag. David, in his last days, bade his son Solomon slay Joab. King's Counsellors. Lucius, King of Rome, stood by the chimney with a knight and his chamberlain, asking them what sort of king the people said he was. They glosed, and told him that the people laid all fault upon his council; but the king's fool, who sat by the fire on his stool playing with his bauble, laughed them to scorn, and said—

“Sir king, if that it were so
Of wisdom in thin ownë mode
That thou thy selven werë good,
Thy counseil shuldë nought be bad,”

which set the king thinking, and caused him to put away vicious advisers, that he might take to him friends who amended wrongful laws and stayed the oppression of the people.

“For if the comun people cry
And than a king list nought to ply
To herë, what the clamour wolde,
And other wisë that he sholde
Desdaineth for to done hem grace,
It hath be seen in many place,
There hath befallë great contraire,
And that I find of ensamplaire.”

Richard the Second was the exemplar in Gower's mind when he wrote thus; but the example he gave was a close parallel to Richard in

Rehoboam, who, having been advised by the council of old men to deal justly with his people, gave ear to the scornful counsel of the young, "which was to him his undoing." He was forsaken of his people, and his throne given to Jeroboam. Antony learnt of Scipio to say that he would rather save one of his lieges than have of enemies a thousand dead. The four points of the duty of a king, thus far discussed, are truth, largesse, pity, righteousness; and now the fifth point is that he control the fleshly lusts of nature. Story of Sardanapalus. How Cyrus overcame the Lydians by giving them peace till they had lost their strength in luxury. Amalek's victory over the Hebrews obtained, as Balaam had counselled, by previously sending into their camp a rout of fair women. Solomon turned by his wives to idolatry; partition of his kingdom. Antony's voluptuousness and loss thereby. Story of Tarquin and Lucrece. (From the 'Gesta Romanorum,' which had it from Augustine's 'De Civitate Dei.') Story of Virginius. (Val. Max. vi. 1, 2.) Story of the husbands of Sara, daughter of Raguel, of Rages, a town of Media. Seven in succession had their necks wrung by Asmodeus on the wedding night, because they married for lust only; but the eighth was Tobit, who, taught by Raphael, defied the fiend. (Apocrypha. Tobit, ch. vi.-viii.)

The Lover is thankful to his Confessor for all this instruction, though, he says,

"The talës sounen in min ere
But yet min herte is ellëswhere.

* * * *

Forthy, my godë fader dere,
Leve and speke of my matere
Touchend of love as we begonne,
If that there be ought over ronne
Or ought forgete or left behinde,
Which falleth unto lovës kinde
Wherof it nedeth to be shrive,
Now axeth, so that while I live
I might amende that is amis.

Confessor: My godë derë sonë, yis."

He proceeds therefore in

Book VIII. to start from the fall of Lucifer and the first peopling of the world by Adam and Eve, and after the Deluge by the children of Noah, on his way to inquiry touching *Lust*, the seventh and last of the Deadly Sins. Caligula and his three sisters. Ammon and Thamar, Lot's daughters. King Antiochus and his daughter; this passing to the story of Apollonius of Tyre, which is told at greater length than any other tale in the 'Confessio Amantis,' and than which there is no tale in the book told better. The story is in the 'Gesta Romanorum,' and the 'Pantheon of Godfrey of Viterbo,' from which Gower says that he took it. It was taken direct from Gower for plot of the play of 'Pericles Prince of Tyre,' which is among the works of Shakspeare. Gower, as Chorus, opens and closes that play, and connects some of its parts. The opening speech assigned to him, testifies not only to the popularity of this story of his, but also to the use made of this one, and doubtless

many other of the tales of the 'Confessio Amantis,' many years after the poet's death.

"To sing a song that old was sung,
From ashes ancient Gower is come ;
* * * * *
It hath been sung at festivals,
On ember eves, and holy ales,
And lords and ladies in their lives
Have read it for restoratives."

This is the last tale in Gower's collection. After hearing it, the lover entered more particularly with his Confessor into a discussion of his own affairs. Genius offered to convey to Venus and Cupid a letter from the woful lover, written with his tears instead of ink. Upon this Venus appeared to him :

"She axeth me, what was my name.
Madame, I saidë, Johan Gower."

She told him that the complaints of his letter were against Nature :

"For lovës lust and lockës hore
In chambre accorden nevermore.
And though thou feigne a yong coràge,
It sheweth well by thy visàge
That oldë grisel is no fole [foal]."

Thus bidden to remember his age, he became chill, pale, and swooned. Then Cupid came with lusty youths, adorned and garlanded, and a loud sound of mirth and music.

"There was Tristram, which was beleved
With Bele Isolde, and Lancelot
Stode with Gunnor, and Galahot
With his lady."

And many more, the recital of whose names is chiefly a recitation of the characters of the love tales he has been telling. Then came towards Venus, with a soft pace, Elde, who had a smaller company than youth ; David and Solomon, Samson, Virgil, Ovid — old men who had been servants to love ; and they, coming to the place where Venus stood and the poet lay, with one voice prayed for his sake. Upon which Venus bade Cupid comfort him, and he did this by drawing the fiery dart out of his heart. Then Venus put over his heart an ointment more cold than any key, and held to him a mirror, in which he saw his faded colour, dim, sad eyes, face wrinkled with age, and hoary hair. He compared, therefore, the course of his life to the twelve months of the year. Venus then, laughing, asked him what love was, and he replied that he knew not. So he received absolution from Genius, and from Venus a pair of black beads hung about his neck, inscribed "Pur reposer," with the counsel—

"My sonë, be well ware therefore
And kepe the sentence of my lore,

And tarie thou in my court no more,
But go there vertue moral dwelleth,
Where ben thy bokës, as men telleth,
Which of long timë thou hast write."

The name of "moral Gower," given to his friend by Chaucer, in the closing dedication of his 'Troilus and Cressida,' appears thus at once to have passed into use. Gower, in recognising it, made Venus add, with pleasant compliment, reminder to his friend Chaucer, that he also was growing old and ripe for other work than songs of love. For thus spoke Venus to the aged Gower, whom she had dismissed from her court :

"And grete well Chaucer, when ye mete
As my disciple and my poete.
For in the flourës of his youth,
In sondry wise, as he well couth
Of ditties and of songës glade,
The which he for my sakë made,
The lond fulfilled is over all ;
Whereof to him in speciall
Above all other I am most holde.
Forthy, now in his daiës olde,
Thou shalt him tellë this messàge,
That he, upon his later age
To sette an end of all his werke,
As he which is min ounë clerke,
Do make his Testament of Love,
As thou has do thy shrifte above,
So that my court it may recorde."

From a later copy of the 'Confessio Amantis,' this passage was omitted when the occasion for it had passed away ; when Chaucer, acting pleasantly on Gower's hint, (or, as will appear more likely, finishing what he was about when his old friend thus alluded to his work,) had produced his 'Testament of Love,' and, the 'Canterbury Tales' having appeared, the retention of this graceful reminder that he also was now too old for the writing of love ditties, would have been not so much a compliment as an impertinence. Venus, having spoken, vanished into the sky. Then Gower went home "a softe pas," with his heart set upon his country ; and being come home, he says, to the Creator of kings,

"Upon my bare knees I praie,
That he this londe in siker waie
Woll set upon good governaunce.
For if men take in remembraunce
What is to live in unitë"

* * * * *

And so the poem ends, as it opened, by earnestly calling upon all classes of Englishmen to do their duty before God. As for the old poet, his work is done as a writer—

“ And thus forthy my finall leve
I takë now for ever more.”

I write no more of love, so various and fickle in its nature, that gives no man fulness of delight.

“ But thilkë lovë, which that is
Within a mannës herte affirmed
And stant of charitë confirmed,
Such love is goodly for to have,
Such lovë may the body save,
Such lovë may the soule amende.
The highë God such love us sende
Forth with the remenaunt of grace,
So that above, in thilkë place
Where resteth love and allë pees,
Our joië may ben endëles.”

These are the last lines of Gower's English poem.

Notes of their probable source added to the account here given of the tales in the ‘*Confessio Amantis*’ will have served to indicate the contents of the library of a highly-educated English gentleman in the fourteenth century. Something of Scripture History, a well-worn Ovid,—Chaucer had a Virgil and a Livy,—historical and other works of Churchmen, Augustine's ‘*De Civitate Dei*,’ Cassiodorus, Isidorus, Paulus Diaconus, the ‘*Pantheon*’ of Godfrey of Viterbo, Helinand, Vincent of Beauvais; some of the later of the old historians, as Valerius Maximus, Josephus, and Trogus Pompeius, or Justin; at the head of philosophy, the ‘*Secretum Secretorum*,’ ascribed to Aristotle, with its doctrines of the philosopher's three stones and of the government of princes; in fiction, the prose tales of the ‘*Gesta Romanorum*,’ ‘*Barlaam and Josaphat*,’ the ‘*Seven Sages*,’ some French lays and fabliaux, and other collections; the mediæval ‘*Geste of Troy*,’ in various forms, but founded usually upon the prose narrative of Dares Phrygius, or the metrical version of Guido Colonna; the favourite romance of ‘*Alexander the Great*,’ and as large a collection as could be afforded of the Arthurian and other metrical romances, then in much request; some writings of Petrarch, the ‘*Roman de la Rose*,’ and copies of the newest fashionable poems out of France, allegorical romances and short fancy pieces, “that highten balades, rondels, virelaies” poems of Froissart, Gransson, Machault, and Eustache Deschamps.

The books last named were in favour with Chaucer, and all who cultivated polite literature in those days: but, ^{Gower on} though he himself wrote French Balades, the bent of ^{love.} Gower's mind seems to have been towards more serious work. The spirit of the 'Confessio Amantis' is like that of the 'Vox Clamantis,' religiously earnest and practical; but it is a poem of less force, because the poet is not speaking directly from his own soul to the minds and hearts of his readers. His utterance is less direct and natural; his voice comes muffled to us through the artificial wrappings of a plan that did not interest himself. Yet he speaks as directly as his plan will let him. Of its main spirit enough has been shown; but, as he professes to write here of Love, it remains to be noted that in no writer of his time have we the master-passion figured so distinctly as what it was, in his time, commonly taken to be, a strong animal instinct. The most remarkable expression of this is to be found in the too tolerant comment upon Ovid's tale of Canace. Chaucer's rebuke of this tale represented, doubtless, the opinion of many; but Chaucer, alone, (who, with a clear intellect and a fine sense of truth and beauty, married early enough to correct by his own experience his observation of society,) had in those days attained at all, and he had attained but imperfectly, to the perception of a sacred bond, spiritual and indestructible, in true marriage between man and woman. The earnest and religious Englishman, to whom his friend Chaucer gave the name of "moral Gower," is never consciously indelicate, there is not a coarse jest in all his poetry; he is respectful to women, says there are "enough of good wives." But even for that reason—because we feel its sober seriousness—the materialism of his view of love is the more noticeable. There is no poet of his time who makes us feel, so often as Gower does in the 'Confessio Amantis,' the touch, as it were, of naked flesh; who so often leads us to remember that he wrote when night-clothes were not worn.

Of Gower's English verse the few passages quoted in the preceding sketch of the 'Confessio Amantis,' will ^{Gower's Eng-} suffice to show that it was musical. Indeed, consider-^{lish.} ing the inordinate stress laid upon rhymes and verbal harmonies by the Provençal school of poets, and all those whom they

inspired, it is obvious that no poet of the fourteenth century would have been accounted tolerable, if he wrote rugged verse. If the text be accurate, and we pronounce their words as men pronounced them when they were first written, the lines of Gower and Chaucer are, indeed, perfectly smooth. It is hard to suppose that, at a time when throughout Europe even inordinate stress was laid upon mechanical excellence in versifying, our best poets and ablest men were unable to count syllables into sets of eight or ten, and arrange words so that their accents should fall in the proper places; and a closer study of our early writers has removed, during the present century, much of the delusion of ignorance that ascribed to ruggedness of theirs the inability of later readers to return to the old methods of pronunciation. Thus, in Gower's English, as in modern German, the word *eye* is a dissyllable—

“Whose eyë may nothing asterte
The privetës of mannës herte,”

so are the words *love*, *name*, *vice*, *chirche*, *pope*, *write*, *here* (*hear*), *were*, and the like, when a consonant follows; but before a vowel they are monosyllables. The addition of “*th*” to such words as “*make*” and “*speke*” did not, in Gower's time, as now, transform them into dissyllables; but “*maketh*” and “*speketh*” were words of one syllable. Let us apply these rules to the reading of what seems to be a rugged couplet:—

“And all maketh lovë well I wote
Of which min herte is ever hote.”

Here “*maketh*” is, as always, a monosyllable, and “*love*” is a dissyllable, because the “*e*” precedes a consonant; as “*herte*” in the next line would have been a dissyllable, if its final “*e*” had not been followed by a vowel.

Another point especially to be remembered in the reading of old English, is that the French words introduced into the language, being still near to their French source, retained much of their French pronunciation, and that this fact often affects the placing of the accent. The accent now placed on the first syllable was in Gower's time on the last syllable in such words

as natùre, honèst, comùn (common), honoür, justìce, envÿ (which made envíous, as

“How Perse after his falsë tonge
Hath so thenvíous bellë rong”)

purchàse, Constànce, resòn, graciòus. In such a word as conscièncë, we have an example of the accent placed as in French and the sounding of the final e before a consonant, thus making the word a double stumblingblock to those who require of writers in the fourteenth century foreknowledge of the pronunciation of the eighteenth or nineteenth :—

“But sone, if thou wilt live in rest
Of conscièncë well assised,
Er that thou slee, be wel avised.”

If these principles be borne in mind; with Gower's use of “sigh” for “saw,” “nought” for “not,” in the modern sense, and the old Saxonism “not” from “nitan,” answering to “wot” from “witan,” and in the sense of “know not;” while the truth is firmly recognised that every line, if it have been rightly copied, wants only right reading to fall into music, very few difficulties will be found even by the inexpert reader of Gower's verse.¹

¹ There are ten MSS. of the ‘Confessio Amantis’ at Oxford, four at Cambridge, three in the British Museum, others at Dublin, and in private collections. MS. Harl. 3490 in the Brit. Mus. is a copy, written in the fifteenth century, of the version dedicated to King Richard II. The Stafford MS., in the library of the Earl of Ellesmere, from which some pages have been cut out for the illuminations at the opening of four of the books, is thought to have been written between 1399 and 1413, and to have belonged to Henry IV. It is a copy of the Lancaster version, with alterations, omissions, and additions, especially in the latter part of the fifth and in the sixth and seventh books, not commonly met with in old copies, but found in Berthelette's edition. MSS. Harl. 7184 and 3869 represent the ordinary Lancaster version.—The first printed edition was Caxton's, in 1483; the second, somewhat modernised in spelling, that printed by Thomas Berthelette, in Fleet-street, printer to the King's grace. Its date is 1532. In 1554 Berthelette printed another edition, still more modernised, which is that from which Alexander Chalmers, in 1810, reprinted the ‘Confessio Amantis’ in his ‘Works of the English Poets from Chaucer to Cowper.’ A few years ago, Dr. Reinhold Pauli collated the text of Berthelette's first edition, with the Harleian MSS. 7184 and 3869, using the Richard II. version (MS. Harl. 3490), and the Stafford MS. in places where

Assuredly it is not in want of the mechanical quality of smoothness that we are to look for the shortcomings of his English poem. Its structure is too artificial, and its literalness not being, as in the 'Vox Clamantis,' the plain-speaking of a patriot whose soul is stirred, the want of original creative power becomes evident. But while his strength is in his Latin poem, even his 'Confessio Amantis' entitled Gower to the escape he has had from the fate that has befallen the poems of the "philosophical Strode."

At the end of 'Troilus and Cressida,' Chaucer wrote—

"O morall Gower, this booke I direct
To thee and to the philosophicall Strode,
To vouchsafe therë need is to correct
Of your benignities and zealës good."

Ralph Strode was a Dominican of Jedburgh Abbey, in highest credit as a theologian and philosopher, about the year 1370. He studied first among his Scottish countrymen at Jedburgh, then was sent to Paris, travelled over France, Germany, and Italy, and even visited Syria and the Holy Land. After his return he was appointed Rector in several new monasteries. Leland says that Ralph Strode was "one of the most illustrious ornaments of Merton College." He was in credit as a poet in both Latin and English, and wrote in verse Fables and Panegyrics; in prose, an account of his journey to the Holy Land, a book of Logic, a book, once famous, in elegiac verse, commonly known as the 'Phantasma Radulphi,'¹ and 'Positions and Eighteen Arguments against John Wiclif.' Some portions of Strode's Latin writing were printed in Germany in the sixteenth century, as parts of other now forgotten books, his 'Phantasmata' and other works, in Venice, with the comments of Alexander Sermoneta, in 1517; but nothing of his has ever been printed in England.

A writer of the life of Chaucer, prefixed to Urry's edition, found appended in Latin to a MS. of Chaucer's treatise on the

they were important, and taking much pains to restore the spelling, and thereby preserve the metre. The result of his labour was an edition in three vols. (London, 1857), which contains the best text of Gower's English poem.

¹ On the strength of it Leland calls him "nobilis poeta."—'Collectanea,' vol. iv. p. 55 of Hearne's edition.

Astrolabe this colophon: "Here ends the treatise of the conclusions of the Astrolabe, compiled by Geoffrey Chaucer for the use of his son Lewis, at that time a student of the University of Oxford, and under the tuition of the most excellent philosopher, Master N. Strode." Thence he inferred, in spite of the different initial to the Christian name, that Chaucer's friend, "the philosophical Strode," was also the tutor of his ten-year-old son. Distinctive mention of the tutor Strode as "the most excellent philosopher," makes it more probable that the writer of the note miswrote N for R as the initial of Strode's Christian name, than that the reference should be to another person.

CHAPTER IV.

THE genius of Geoffrey Chaucer is not to be likened to a lone
The spirit of Chaucer. star glittering down on us through a rift in surrounding
darkness, or to a spring-day in the midst of winter,
that blossoms and fades, leaving us to wait long for its next
fellow. He had in his own time for brother writers some of the
worthiest men of our race, and we shall find hereafter that the
light of the English mind was not quenched when he died.
Nor is it natural in any way whatever to think of Chaucer as an
isolated man. No English poet equal to him had preceded him,
or lived in his own day. Few writers since his time have risen
to his level. But much of his strength came of a genial spirit
of companionship. It was his good-will to humanity, and his
true sense of his own part in it, that gave him his clear insight
into life. In him the simple sturdiness of the dutiful God-
seeking Anglo-Saxon is first blended intimately with the social
joyousness of Norman wit. Wiclif, Langlande, Gower, and the
rest of Chaucer's fellow-workers, were all of them mainly Anglo-
Saxon in the temper of their minds. Chaucer worked to the
same end as they; not less religiously, though with much less
despair over the evils that he saw. He does not see far who
despairs of any part of God's creation. Entering more perfectly
than his neighbours into characters of men, Chaucer could deal
with them all good-humouredly; for he had the tolerance that
must needs come of a large view of life, exact in its simplicity.
Of Chaucer's there is not a thought coloured by prejudice or
passion. He paints, in his chief work, character in all its variety,
without once giving us, under some other name, a covert re-
production of himself. His pleasure was great in the company
of men. When he speaks, as he does in the 'Testament of
Love,' of injuries borne—and whether injuries or not, at least
they were severe worldly reverses—he speaks of them altogether
without bitterness. When he attacks the hypocrisy that traded

on religion, and in so doing strips vice of its cloak, the sharpest note of his scorn has in it a rich quality of human kindliness. His healthy sense, whether of the serious or the ridiculous, is distinctively and completely English. In perception of the ridiculous, he is beforehand with the most fastidious of his countrymen, and with his own native instinct he knows where an Englishman would turn with laughter or displeasure from words or thoughts that might seem good to any other people. For this reason the foreigner who studies Chaucer fails always to understand him thoroughly. Earnest as he was—disposed at times even to direct religious teaching—Chaucer was quick to see the brighter side of life, and ready to enjoy it in the flesh. When he was rich he seems to have delighted freely and naturally in whatever good things wealth would bring him; and when stripped of substance he set up no mean wailing of distress, but quietly consoling himself with a keener relish of the wealth that was within him, he dined worse and wrote his ‘Canterbury Tales.’

Let us know something of the conditions of his life before we look to the fruit of his mind. And, first, of his name. Life of Chaucer. If the name Chaucer be derived from Chaucier or Chaussier, shoemaker, some of the poet’s ancestors must have been men who lived by useful labour. But there is a Chaucer on the Roll of Battle Abbey, and a mention of le Chausir in King John’s reign among the Tower records, suggested to Thomas Speght that “shoemaker” was the name of a Court office. It is an old cause of distress to polite biographers, who do their best to gloss over the fact, that a man of genius is very often not born in the purple of gentility. Chausir as a Court office might be not Chaussier, shoemaker, but Chauffecire—Chaffwax—the official warmer of the wax that was to take impressions of the royal seal. No doubt that is in truth meaner work than shoe-making, although in the world’s eyes a higher dignity. Leland, who was commissioned by Henry VIII. to search all libraries in England for matters of antiquity, writing a little before 1545, said of Chaucer that he was of noble family.¹ Speght, in 1598,

¹ Pits said that Chaucer was the son of a knight; Hearne that he was a merchant: but these are baseless assertions, made upon their own authority, or representing the most vague traditional impressions.

argued that he was probably the son of a vintner, and born not, as Leland had thought, in Oxfordshire or Berkshire, but in the city of London. "If the Grecian Homer," says Fuller, "had seven, let our English have three places to contest for his nativity."

In Chaucer's 'Testament of Love' are words which to Speght seemed conclusive evidence that London was the poet's birth-place. Sir Harris Nicolas objects that the words were not spoken by Chaucer in his own person. I believe they were; but the reader shall judge for himself when we discuss in its place that prose-work of Chaucer's. These are the words upon which Speght relied: "The city of London, that is to me so dear and sweet, in which I was forthgrown, and more kindly love have I to that place than to any other in earth (as every kindly creature hath full appetite to that place of his kindly ingendure and to wille rest and peace in that stead to abide)."

To the citation of this passage Speght adds that in the records of Guildhall we find that there was one Richard Chaucer, vintner of London in the 23rd year of Edward III., "who might well be Geoffrey Chaucer's father. Also there was a nun of St. Helen's in London, named Elizabeth Chaucer, in the first year of Richard II., as it is in record, which seemeth either to have been his sister or of his kindred, and by likelihood a Londoner born."

Richard Chaucer, the vintner, died in 1349, when, according to accepted calculation, the poet's age would have been twenty-one. His will was dated in that year, on Easter-day, and proved in the following July. He left his tenement and tavern in Royal-street, at the corner of Kerion-lane, to the church of St. Mary Aldermary, *i. e.* Elder Mary, as the oldest church of St. Mary in the City. It was near one end of his street; and the new church, with its handsome tower, built on the same site at the cost of a pious knight, after the destruction of the old church in the fire of London, will be found by any one who turns out of Cheapside into Bow-lane, and walks to the bottom of it. Near that church, within sound of Bow-bells and the bells of St. Paul's, close by, Geoffrey Chaucer—if, as I believe, he was the vintner's son—was born and bred. In that church of Aldermary Richard Chaucer, the vintner, was buried in 1348. He left to it the inn in Royal-street, now College Hill, and left it by a will that named

no member of his family but Thomas Heyroun, son of his deceased wife, Mary. A will was often thus intended to define and assure only special bequests, leaving the general division of property to be made according to the usual law of inheritance. The vintner, who mentioned no son in his will, certainly had a son John. For by the will of the Thomas Heyroun whom Richard Chaucer, the vintner, did name, a will also executed in 1349, Thomas Heyroun appointed as executor his brother John Chaucer; and there is another deed extant which defines John Chaucer as "citizen and vintner, executor of the will of my brother Thomas Heyroun." Geoffrey, whose age was twenty-one when Richard Chaucer died, may very well, therefore, have been the son of Richard and a younger brother of John, vintners both.

Royal-street, in which was the tavern left by Richard Chaucer to his church, was named from a Tower Royal, at the upper end of it, which existed in the reign of Edward I. It was let afterwards for private occupation, was in the time of Edward II. called "the Royal," and in the time of Edward III. was given as the "Royal Inn," worth 20*l.* a year, to the college of St. Stephen, Westminster.¹ The tavern at the corner of Kerion-lane was in that part of Royal-street which lies within the Vintry Ward, the seat of the London wine-trade, where in Chaucer's lifetime (1357) Vintner's Hall was built, with almshouses for thirteen poor people. At that time Gascon wines were sold at fourpence and Rhenish at sixpence the gallon—about three and four pence and five shillings in present money.

The vintners or wine-tunners, to whose body Chaucer's father seems to have belonged, were, in the time of Edward III., called Merchant Vintners of Gascoyne. Some of them were English born, some foreigners, great Bordeaux or Gascon merchants; but all were subjects of the king of England. Several of them were mayors of London, and one of them, who held the mayoralty in Edward III.'s reign, in the year 1357, when

¹ Afterwards it was at the church of St. Michael Paternoster in Royal Street, or the Royal, that Richard Whittington was buried and his college founded. The name of the part of the street in Vintry Ward became therefore College Street, now chiefly occupied by the printing-press and warehouses of wholesale dealers in pens and paper. A small segment of the old street that now opens upon Cannon Street is still called "Tower Royal."

our Chaucer was twenty-nine years old, feasted together at his house in the vintry the four kings of England, France, Scotland, and Cyprus. Richard Chaucer, the vintner, therefore, probably could well afford to bequeath to his church the rental of a tavern out of his estate; would have had means for the liberal education of his younger son; and afterwards might naturally, with his money and by counsel and help of courtly customers, have enabled the young scholar to make his start in life as a court page. For even royal princes went in search of good wine to carouses in the vintry.

Geoffrey Chaucer's arms did not connect his family with any noble house. A perpendicular line divided the shield into two halves, and it was crossed by a transverse bar. On one side of the middle line the bar was coloured red on a white ground, on the other side white on a red ground. Thomas Speght said, "It may be that it were no absurdity to think (nay, it seemeth likely, Chaucer's skill in geometry considered) that he took the grounds and reason of these arms out of Euclid, the 27 and 28 proposition of the first book; and some, perchance, are of that opinion whose skill therein is comparable to the best." But Thomas Fuller left us word¹ that "Some more wits have made it the dashing of white and red wine (the parents of our ordinary claret) as nicking his father's profession." The truth may have been spoken in that jest. Arms were not granted to merchants until the reign of Henry VI. But long before that time wealthy merchants of the middle ages bore their trade marks upon shields.²

The date of the birth of Geoffrey Chaucer is inferred to have been 1328, from the inscription on the monument in Westminster Abbey, raised to him in 1556 by Nicholas Brigham. But in Dart's *Life of Chaucer*, prefixed to Urry's edition of his works, there is mention of a dispute which occurred in the tenth year of Richard II., between Sir Richard le Scrope and Sir Richard Grosvenor concerning their arms. Heralds were appointed to examine and take evidence, and many of the chief nobility appeared as witnesses. Among the witnesses was Geoffrey Chaucer, who testified "that he saw Scrope armed at Rottes in

¹ 'Church History,' bk. iv. cent. 14. Vol. ii. p. 383, Brewer's edition.

² Boutell's 'Heraldry' (ed. 1864), p. 118.

France, azure with a bend d'or, and that coat was by public voice and fame taken for Scrope's coat." When Mr. William Godwin was at work upon his life of Chaucer, he sought for a copy of the document in the Tower here referred to, and found in it that Chaucer, examined in this cause on the 12th of October, 1386, in the church of St. Margaret's, Westminster, is described as "*Geffray Chaucere, Esquier, del age de xl ans et plus, armeez par xxvij ans,*" (aged forty years and more, and having borne arms for twenty-seven years). As Chaucer's age, according to the usual calculation, would at that time have been fifty-eight, Mr. Godwin, while adhering to the old reckoning, raised upon this document the shadow of a doubt whether Chaucer might not have been, at every stage of his life, fifteen or sixteen years younger than had been supposed, and whether he might not accordingly have died in 1400 at the age of about fifty-five, instead of seventy. If so, Gower could hardly have admonished his friend of his "dayes old," and "latter age," nor would Chaucer, in his 'House of Fame,' have pleaded "I am old," as reason against his instruction in the science of the stars. But, in truth, the rough statement of his age, placed at the head of his deposition—"forty years and more"—did not aim at accuracy. The only legal intent being to show that the witness was of an age accordant with his testimony, such rough statements are very common in old copies of depositions. The use of the vague phrase "and upwards" implies clearly that exactitude in this matter was not sought or regarded—that the witness's age had been roughly estimated, not precisely asked. There is besides a known discrepancy of ten years between statement and fact in the age assigned to another witness in this case.

Dart and Thomas in the Life prefixed in 1721 to Urry's Chaucer, accept as unquestioned 1328 for the date of Chaucer's birth, but do not believe that Geoffrey was a son of Richard the Vintner, because if so Richard would have been "an unnatural bigot to give all he had to the church, and leave his son unprovided for." We have seen, however, that Richard certainly had a son John following his father's business, and that the merchants of the Vintry were a thriving class. It is not at all likely that Richard Chaucer's worldly wealth was confined to the house

and tavern in Royal-street, of which he gave the freehold to the church in which he had worshipped, and in which he would be buried. It is more reasonable that the liberality of the gift should be taken as a measure of the wealth left to be divided in the legal way, for which no formal bequest was usual or requisite. It is to be remembered, too, that if that was the house in which Richard Chaucer had lived, not a house rented under him, and if his son John continued to live in it, the business was not bequeathed. The only difference made by the bequest would be the payment of an annual rental to the church, endowment on account of prayers for the giver's soul, instead of rent-free occupation.

The writers of the Life of Chaucer prefixed to Urry's edition, wishing to find Geoffrey Chaucer a father less near in fellowship to the host of the Tabard, say, "We find one John Chaucer attending upon Edw. III. and Queen Philippa in their expedition to Cologne, who had the king's protection to go over sea, in the twelfth year of his reign. It is highly probable that this gentleman was the father of our Geoffrey." It is quite as probable that this John Chaucer, whose name is in a long list of persons, one explicitly described as citizen of London, receiving letters of protection from June to Christmas while accompanying the king to parts beyond the sea, was no other than Richard the Vintner's eldest son, and that his business was with the royal commissariat. The king left Orwell for Antwerp with a large fleet and brilliant following on the 16th of July, and kept splendid court in Antwerp and Louvain. There were more corks drawn than swords, and faithful vintners were essential parts of the king's following. We have seen that Richard the Vintner, whom I believe to have been Geoffrey Chaucer's father, took in second marriage a widow named Heroun, and that John Chaucer, citizen and vintner, was executor in 1349 for her son Thomas, his brother. When, therefore, we find a Heroun—John Heroun—as well as a John Chaucer, among those who ten years earlier had on the same day licences to cross the sea, one probability is as good as another if we suppose that the husband of the woman who in her widowhood was married ten or eleven years later by Chaucer's father was then living; that he, too, was of the Vintry; that the families were friends together; and that John Chaucer, being a young man,

went as his father's agent on the king's victualling business in John Heroun's company.

It is evident from his works that Geoffrey Chaucer had been liberally educated. His knowledge of Astronomy appears in his book on the Astrolabe; his knowledge of Hermetic science in the 'Canon Yeoman's Tale'; his knowledge of Divinity in the 'Parson's Tale'; his knowledge of Philosophy in the 'Testament of Love.' There is no certain evidence that he studied either at Oxford or Cambridge. In the 'Court of Love,' perhaps his earliest extant verse, he calls himself Philogenet of Cambridge, clerk. Philogenet is a poetical name, taken in the telling of a lover's dream, where it is coupled with that of a lady Philobone; but "of Cambridge, clerk," is a precise description, less likely to have arisen from the simple exercise of fancy; and probably it did point to the individual position of the writer. It is confirmed by the accuracy of his reference to brook, bridge, and mill, described in the opening of the 'Reve's Tale':—

"At Trompyngton, not fer fro Cantebrigge,
Ther goth a brook, and over that a brigge,
Upon the whichë brook there stant a melle."

Leland claimed him for both Universities, and said that at Oxford he was probably in Canterbury or in Merton College, with John Wiclif; where, besides his private study, he frequented with great diligence the public schools and disputations, thereupon becoming "a witty logician, a sweet rhetorician, a pleasant poet, a grave philosopher, and a holy divine. Moreover he was a skilful mathematician, instructed therein by John Some and Nicholas Lynne, friars Carmelites and reverend clerks, whom in his book on the Astrolabe Chaucer greatly commends." He is said also to have visited France and Flanders in his youth, and to have been fellow-student with Gower among the lawyers of the Inner Temple.¹ "For," says Speght, "not many years since Master Buckley did see a record in the same house, where Geoffrey Chaucer was fined two shillings for beating a Franciscan friar in Fleet-street."² Study for a year or two in one of the Inns

¹ Leland says that in his later life, after the travel in France "*collegia leguleiorum frequentavit.*"

² This was published in 1598. No such record is now to be discovered.

of Court was of old time no unusual part of the education of an English gentleman who might one day have to administer or perhaps help in amending some of the laws of his country. But upon the story of Chaucer as a student in the Temple Francis Thynne observes, that "the lawyers were not of the Temple till the latter part of the reign of king Edward III., at which time Chaucer was a grave man, holden in great credit and employed in embassy." Dugdale gives the tradition that the Temple having passed to the Knights Hospitallers in the reign of Edward III., came to the lawyers by demise from them.

In his evidence, given in 1386, upon the question of arms-bearing between Sir Richard le Scrope and Sir Robert Grosvenor, the nature of his testimony makes the fact material that Chaucer had borne arms for twenty-seven years. This would place his first service with the army in the year 1359. He does, in fact, testify to the arms he saw Scrope using before the town of Retiers in Brittany, when, in the autumn of 1359, he was with Edward III.'s army of invasion, and says that he saw Scrope always bearing the same arms, until the said Geoffrey Chaucer was taken prisoner. Thus we learn incidentally, on his own testimony, what happened to him three years after the battle of Poitiers, when he was thirty-one years old. The English king then, while the French king was still his prisoner, at the end of October sailed again to France with the largest and best army raised in England for more than a century, and in that army Geoffrey Chaucer first served as a soldier.

The English made their way to Rheims. After seven weeks of unsuccessful siege they left Rheims, and marched into Burgundy, where the Duke then paid for a three-years' truce fifty thousand marks. Edward marched next upon Paris, where he burnt the suburbs, and would make no peace, although his troops were suffering from famine. Famine compelled a withdrawal into Brittany, hasty as flight, and with its track marked by dead bodies of men and horses that dropped on the way. Near Chartres, a great storm added its terrors to the misery of Edward's army, and the king, stretching his arms towards the cathedral, vowed to God and the Virgin that he would make peace. The treaty called the "Great Peace" was signed accordingly, on the 8th of May, at Bretigni, and in the following

October solemnly ratified at Calais. It was in Brittany, during the disastrous days of the campaign, that Chaucer was made prisoner. But there can be little doubt that the treaty of peace, which very soon followed, procured in a short time his release.

After this time of his imprisonment in France, the course of Chaucer's life passed without record known to us until, in the year 1367, he, being then thirty-nine years old, was described as a valet of the King's Household, "*dilectus valettus noster*,"¹ and in consideration of his former and future services there was granted to him a salary of twenty marks for life, or until he should be otherwise provided for. A mark was thirteen shillings and fourpence of the money of that time. There went, in those days, only 15*l.* to a pound weight of gold, instead of, as now 46*l.* and a fraction; the pound weight also of silver was made into twenty-five instead of sixty-six shillings. Prices too have changed. In relation to the average cost of the various necessities of life at that period and this, a mark of Chaucer's time was worth more than six guineas of our money, and Chaucer's court salary of twenty marks would be equal, probably, to a modern salary of 140*l.*²

The title of Valettus, here given to Chaucer, corresponds in chivalry to that of Page. The professor of arms was first Valettus or Page, then Armiger or Esquire, then Knight. The young noble, a page at seven, became an esquire at fourteen; but

¹ Rot. Pat. 41 Edw. III. *Fœdera*, N.E., vol. iii. p. 829, quoted by Godwin. Sir Harris Nicolas adds, that the payment of this pension, Nov. 6, 1367, is the first notice of Chaucer on the Issue Rolls of the Exchequer.

² In 1350 the average price of a horse was 18*s.* 4*d.*; of an ox, 1*l.* 4*s.* 6*d.*; of a cow, 17*s.* 2*d.*; of a sheep, 2*s.* 7*d.*; of a hog, 2*s.* 6*d.*; of a goose, 9*d.*; of a hen, 2*d.*; of a day's labour in husbandry, 3*d.*—Sir George Shuckburgh Evelyn in the '*Philosophical Transactions for the year 1798*,' p. 176. Wheat varied in price greatly. At Oxford, in 1310, the best wheat was in June, 10*s.* a quarter; in December, 7*s.* 8*d.*; and in October, 1311, 4*s.* 10*d.* See the Rev. W. F. Lloyd's '*Prices of Corn in Oxford in the beginning of the Fourteenth Century; also from the year 1583 to the Present Time*.' Oxford, 1830. Professor J. E. Thorold Rogers, who is making a thorough study of values, tells me that, about 1360, the buying power of money was, for necessities eight times, for luxuries from twelve to eighteen times, greater than now. He allows ten to be a fair average multiple. Sir G. S. Evelyn, whom Godwin follows, made eighteen the multiple. That certainly is misleading. It would make the day's hire of a field labourer worth four and sixpence. But, of course, no average is true to each detail.

with laxer usage,—like that which now attaches to the word Esquire,—the King's "Valettus" was a "gentleman," a person to whom courtly rank was accredited, although he had no right to write himself Esquire. A few years later, in 1374, when Chaucer's age was forty-six, and he had been sent on the king's embassies, being admitted to higher consideration, he was called Esquire in the official records.

It may have been about the time of his receiving the grant of his court salary of twenty marks, or earlier, that Chaucer took to wife Philippa daughter of Sir Paon de Rouet,¹ a native of Hainault, and King-at-Arms for the province of Guienne. She had been attached to the court of Queen Philippa, after whose death, in 1369, she seems to have passed into the service of Constance of Castile, second wife of John of Gaunt. Her sister Catherine, widow of Sir Hugh Swinford, a knight of Lincoln, who died soon after his marriage, was then also attached to John of Gaunt's family as governess of his children. That was the Catherine Swinford who became John of Gaunt's mistress, and, having given him three sons and a daughter before marriage, was his third wife, after Constance's death in 1394. Her children born before marriage were then declared legitimate, and, through them, Chaucer's sister-in-law became great-grandmother of Margaret Countess of Richmond, mother of Henry VII. and ancestress of all the later sovereigns of England. Thus it was only late in his life that Chaucer became, by their marrying of sisters, brother-in-law to his patron John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster. The less honourable family connexion was that which subsisted during the lifetime of Chaucer's wife Philippa, and until after the writing of the 'Canterbury Tales.'

Thomas Speght, writing in 1598, was the first who said that Chaucer's "place of most abode was at Woodstock, in a fair house of stone next to the King's place, called to this day Chaucer's House, and by that name passed by the Queen to the tenant which there now dwelleth." A dream, and in the dream

¹ See the 'Life of Chaucer,' prefixed by Sir Harris Nicolas to the Aldine edition of Chaucer's poetical works (London, 1845, pp. 60-66) for evidence that Chaucer's wife was not Philippa Pycard, and for an account of the arguments for and against her having been the daughter of Sir Payne Roet. They leave no room for doubt that she was Catherine Swinford's sister.

a park, was the conventional groundwork of almost all court poems of any length, written according to the French fashion in Chaucer's early years. Their following of this fashion has led to a belief that early poems of Chaucer contain his familiar descriptions of the Park at Woodstock. Especially it is pointed out that in the 'Assembly of Foules,' he speaks of "a parke ywalled with grene stone," and that Woodstock Park was the first enclosure of that kind made in England. As to the evidence from Chaucer's works, the simple fact is, as before said, that a park and a dream were the very commonest stock-properties of the court poetry of those days. The name of Chaucer's House retained by the dwelling near the park at Woodstock may, however, have been derived from occupation by the poet at some time of his life; but it more probably descends from Geoffrey's wealthier son Thomas, who had also other possessions with which his father has erroneously been credited.

The memory of Chaucer's patron, John of Gaunt, third son of Edward III., is so familiarly associated now with the first line of Shakspeare's Richard II., that we are not apt to think, as we should, of "Old John of Gaunt, time-honoured Lancaster" as a prince who was twelve years younger than the poet he befriended. Chaucer himself was two years older than the king's eldest son, Edward the Black Prince, whose death left the succession to his boy Richard, and thus changed the course of English history. Edward III.'s sons were, 1, the Black Prince; 2, Lionel of Antwerp, eight years younger; 3, John of Gaunt, two years younger than Lionel. He was born at Ghent in 1340, at the time when his father assumed the style of King of France; 4, Edmund of Langley, but a year younger than John of Gaunt; and 5, Thomas of Woodstock, who was an infant when his brothers were young men. On the 19th of May, 1359, John of Gaunt, under his first title as Earl of Richmond, and being then nineteen years old, married Blanche, aged also nineteen, the second daughter of Henry Duke of Lancaster, son of that Lancaster who had been sent to the scaffold in the reign of Edward II. This Henry of Lancaster, of about equal age with Edward III., was a loyal friend to the crown. He was the first prince of the blood after the children of the king, and he was very much liked by the people. It is the courtship between

the young Prince John of Gaunt and Henry of Lancaster's daughter Blanche, that Chaucer is believed to have celebrated in his poem of the 'Assembly of Fowles.' It is their marriage in 1359, that Chaucer celebrated in the poem entitled 'Chaucer's Dream.' These poems, therefore, indicate Chaucer's connexion with the court at the age of thirty-one, and a few months before he followed Edward III. into France, as one of a great army of invasion. After the peace of Bretigni the war with France was not renewed for nine years, and, after its renewal, Geoffrey Chaucer was employed exclusively in works of peace.

In 1361 Henry of Lancaster, John of Gaunt's father-in-law, died of the plague; that was during the second of the great epidemics of plague in this century. In Italy it raged in 1360, in England in 1361-2. We may remember that probably the end of this plague-season, in 1362, while the English people suffered much and were in discontent with the peace of Bretigni, was the date of the writing of the 'Vision of Piers Plowman.'¹ Henry of Lancaster dying of plague in 1361, in 1362 his daughter Blanche's elder sister and coheiress, Maud, Duchess of Bavaria, died without issue; and then it was that John of Gaunt became, through his wife Blanche, the greatest landowner in England, with estates in eighteen English counties, besides several in Wales. Among his castles were those of Pontefract, Bolingbroke, Leicester, and Kenilworth, and for town-residence he had the most beautiful and stately of English palaces—that of the Savoy—destroyed in the Jack Straw rebellion,² which had been rebuilt from the ground by his late father-in-law. Henry of Lancaster before his death was, excepting the Black Prince, the only man in England of the rank of Duke. But the king now created his sons Lionel of Antwerp and John of Gaunt, Dukes of Clarence and of Lancaster. Thus, then, it came to pass that Chaucer's patron, John of Gaunt, held, at the age of twenty-two, a duchy with peculiar immunities and privileges that was itself source of great wealth and power, and was the wealthiest subject of the crown as Duke of Lancaster and Earl of Richmond, Leicester, Lincoln, and Derby.

In 1369, the year of the death of Edward III.'s Queen

¹ See Bk. I. ch. xxiv.

² See p. 88.

Philippa, died also,—two or three months later than the Queen,—John of Gaunt's wife Blanche, at the age, which was her husband's age also, of twenty-nine. Chaucer, then forty-one years old, paid homage to her memory with a funeral poem, the 'Book of the Duchess,' of which he himself defines the subject in another poem, saying,

"He made the boke, that hight the House of Fame,
And eke the death of Blaunch the Duchesse ;" ¹

and in the poem itself,² where he says of the dead lady—

"And Fairë Whitë was she hete,
That was my ladies namë right;
And she was thereto faire and bright,
She ne had not her namë wronge."

This Duchess Blanche had one son, Henry, afterwards King Henry IV.

John of Gaunt's second wife was a lady through whom he at once claimed and assumed the title of King of Castile and Leon. When Pedro the Cruel had visited the Black Prince in his government of Aquitaine, and had obtained his help in maintaining his disputed title to the throne, he left in Aquitaine his two daughters Constance and Isabel as hostages or guests. The Black Prince restored him to power at the cost of famine and death in the English army, and that fatal shock to the health of the Prince himself, whereof he slowly died. But Pedro afterwards was taken prisoner, his throne was usurped, and he was assassinated by the hand of the usurper. His eldest daughter then became the lawful, although not the actual, heir to the crown, and it was this daughter whom John of Gaunt took for his second wife. He and his younger brother, Edmund of Langley, Duke of York and Earl of Cambridge, went over to Aquitaine, and married in 1371 the two Spanish princesses. John, then aged thirty-one, marrying Constance the elder sister, amused her and himself by keeping the shadow of a royal court at the Savoy, where they held sway as titular King and Queen of Castile and Leon. Such being, thus far, the career and condition of his young patron, of Chaucer's movements in the mean

¹ 'Legend of Good Women,' vv. 417, 418.

² 'Book of the Duchess,' v. 948.

time we know only that he was in London, and drew his pension in November, 1367, May, 1368, and October, 1369. That in the summer of 1370 he had the usual letters of protection for going abroad on the king's service, dated on the 20th of June, to be in force till the next Michaelmas. His pension in the preceding April had been paid to Walter Walshe for him, but he took it himself in October, 1370, and the two next years.¹

On the 12th of November, 1372, Chaucer, being then one of the king's Esquires, was joined in a Commission with Sir James Pronare, who was lieutenant or vice-admiral to Peter de Campo Fregoso, brother to the Doge of Genoa, and Commander-in-chief of the Genoese vessels in the King of England's service, and with John de Mari, another citizen of Genoa, to treat with the Duke, citizens, and merchants of Genoa, for the purpose of choosing some port on the English coast at which the Genoese might establish a commercial factory. The Commissioners were also to settle the franchises, liberties, and immunities which the Genoese traders might enjoy there or elsewhere in England. Any two of the three Commissioners might decide a point, provided John de Mari should be one of the two. An advance of 66*l.* 13*s.* 4*d.* (say 666*l.*, in money of the present day), was made to Chaucer on the 1st of December, 1372, for his expenses, and he left England soon after. All that is known of this mission is that he went to Florence as well as to Genoa; that he had returned before the 22nd of November, 1373, when he received his pension in person; and that on the 4th of February, 1374, he received 25*l.* 6*s.* 8*d.* (about 250*l.* of present value) at the Exchequer, for his expenses while in the king's service at Genoa and Florence in the preceding year.

This payment of expenses was followed in little more than a couple of months by a grant made at Windsor on the day of the annual celebration of the feast of St. George, the 23rd of April,

¹ These and other notes, from the Issue Rolls of the Exchequer, of the payments to Chaucer personally or by deputy, were first published by Sir Harris Nicolas, and the exact references will be found in his 'Life of Chaucer,' prefixed to Pickering's Aldine edition of Chaucer's works. The next three sentences of the text are in the words of Sir Harris Nicolas. The fact stated in the first sentence was proved by Godwin; Sir Harris Nicolas adds the succeeding illustration.

1374. It was the grant of a pitcher of wine daily, to be received in the port of London from the hands of the king's butler, commuted in 1378, the first year of King Richard, for a yearly payment of twenty marks (140*l.*).

In less than another two months after the grant of the daily pitcher of wine, Chaucer was appointed Comptroller of the Customs and Subsidy of Wools, Skins, and Tanned Hides in the Port of London, during the king's pleasure, taking the same fees as other Comptrollers of the Customs and Subsidy. He was, like his predecessors, to write the rolls of his office with his own hand, he was to be continually present, performing his duties personally and not by deputy, and the other part of the seal called the "coket," was to remain in his custody.

These successive gifts Chaucer owed, no doubt, less to Edward III. than to John of Gaunt, who, in this last period of his father's reign, took active part in the administration. Only three days after the gift of the valuable office of Comptroller of Wool Customs, John of Gaunt made also, in his own name, a personal grant from himself to Chaucer of ten pounds (represented now by 100*l.*) a year for life, to be paid at the manor of Savoy. This grant was said to be in consideration of the good service rendered by Chaucer and his wife Philippa to the said Duke, to his Consort, and to his mother the Queen.

The poet was still receiving also his pension of 6*l.* 13*s.* 4*d.* (say 66*l.*) as one of the king's valets, and is termed in the record of payment, "Valettus Hospitii," which implies that he was attached by his office to the Royal Household.

In November, 1375, Chaucer received from the crown custody, which he had for three years, of the lands inherited from his wealthy father Edmond Staplegate of Kent,¹ as a tenant in chief of the crown, by Edmond de Staplegate the younger. The heir, being a minor, by the nature of his holding became ward of the crown, and he would have also to pay to the king—or to any favoured servant to whom the king made over the wardship—a *maritagium* or fee for consent, if he wished it, to his marrying while a minor. Chaucer received in this case, for wardship and marriage fee, 104*l.*, or about 1040*l.* of money at its present

¹ 'Hasted's Kent,' vol. iii. p. 727, vol. iv. pp. 400, 464.

value. The Edmond de Staplegate, of whose heir Chaucer was guardian, was a wealthy Canterbury man, lord of the manor of Staplegate or Nackington, where a hawthorn in one of his fields was cited among boundary marks of the city and liberty. He served in 1346 and at other times, in King Edward III.'s days, as one of the bailiffs of the city, and owned land also in Bilsington, Romney Marsh, and the Isle of Thanet. It was as lord of Bilsington manor that Chaucer's ward, soon after the expiration of his minority, contested with Richard Earl of Arundel the right to officiate as Chief Butler at Richard II.'s coronation.¹ We owe to this contest a knowledge of the amount of fine paid to Chaucer. The Earl of Arundel's father had alienated Bilsington manor to young Edmond's father, who held it in serjeantry by the service of presenting three maple cups as Chief Butler at the king's coronation. It was this tenure which caused the crown after his father's death to claim Edmond Staplegate the younger, as one of its minors, and commit the custody of him "to one Geoffrey Chaucer, to whom he paid 104*l.* for the same." A coronation occurring not long afterwards, young Edmond urged that as he had thus paid for his privilege, so he had a right now to draw profit from it in the fees and perquisites of the Chief Butler at the coronation, including the cup with which the king was served, and other valuable things pertaining to his office. The office at that coronation was given, on a plea of pressure of time, to the earl, but without prejudice to the rights of the Staplegates.

Less than two months after the valuable grant of the wardship of young Edmond Staplegate, Chaucer received from the crown another wardship of less value. It was a gift of the custody of five "solidates" (five shillings, then the value of about twelve acres) of rent in Soles in Kent, in consequence of the minority of the heir of John de Soles, deceased, together with the remote chance of the maritagium of the said heir, William de Soles, then an infant one year old. Soles is a manor in the parish of

¹ In Somner's time, the portrait of Chaucer's ward, Edmond de Staplegate, and his wife, Eleanor at Pytte, for whom he paid Chaucer a marriage fee, were to be seen in coloured glass in the west window of All Saints Church, at Canterbury. He died without issue at the age of about thirty-five.

Nonington, which had been held by the father and grandfather of this infant, by whose death, probably, the possession lapsed from the family, for in the fourth year of Henry IV. it was in other hands.

About half a year later, in July, 1376,—this time as Comptroller of Wool Customs,—Chaucer again received a gift from the crown. It was a gift exceeding in value seven hundred pounds of our money, being a grant of 71*l.* 4*s.* 6*d.*, the fine paid by John Kent of London, for the forfeit of wool conveyed to Dordrecht without having paid duty.

This grant was made to Chaucer when, a few weeks after the death of the Black Prince, John of Gaunt—thirty-six years old—had failed to persuade the Commons to exclude female heirs to the throne, and thereby make himself next heir after his nephew Richard. During the latter years of failing health in the Black Prince, when the king also was enfeebled, John of Gaunt had administered affairs of government. It was he, therefore, who had so freely used the power of the crown to bestow marks of favour upon Chaucer.

The foreign wars having been costly and disastrous, the people had made John of Gaunt answerable for England's failure and distress. The parliament opposed him; it was called by the people the Good Parliament,¹ and the Black Prince gave the support of his name to the opposition. But, after the Black Prince's death, the refusal to endorse Lancaster's scheme for giving himself a chance of the throne was the last patriotic act of the Good Parliament. The Duke of Lancaster became unrestrained chief of the administration.

It was his patron the Duke, therefore, who, towards the end of 1376, joined Chaucer with Sir John Burley, in some secret service, of which the nature is not known. They did not receive letters of protection; therefore, perhaps, did not go abroad. On the 23rd of December in that year Burley was paid 13*l.* 6*s.* 8*d.*, and Chaucer, half that sum (equal to 7*l.*) for the work done.

In February, 1377, Chaucer was associated with Sir Thomas Percy, afterwards Earl of Worcester, in a secret mission to Flanders. He received on the 17th of February 10*l.* (100*l.*) towards

¹ See p. 86.

expenses, and had letters of protection that were to be in force till Michaelmas. Froissart says that he was joined at that time with Sir Guichard d'Angle, afterwards Earl of Huntingdon, and Sir Richard Sturry, to negotiate a secret treaty of the marriage of Prince Richard of England with the Princess Mary of France, adding that the envoys met those of France at Montreuil-sur-Mer, where they remained some time; the truce with France being prolonged until the 1st of the ensuing May. But the embassy of Sir Guichard d'Angle was appointed on the 26th of April, following another embassy of the previous February, both being ostensibly to treat for peace. A fortnight before the appointment of Sir Guichard d'Angle's embassy Chaucer had returned from Flanders, and received from the exchequer 20*l.* (200*l.*) for divers journeys made in the king's service abroad.

A week after he had received that money, letters of protection were issued to Geoffrey Chaucer for service abroad, the letters being in force from their date on the 20th of April to the 1st of August; and on the 30th of April, when the embassy to which Froissart refers was leaving England, Chaucer received 26*l.* 13*s.* 4*d.* (say 266*l.*) in part payment for the service.

In June of that year Edward III., after a reign of half a century, died in the obscurity to which he had retired with Alice Perrers. The change of reign from that of the king worn out at sixty-five to that of the boy of eleven, still left John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, the chief lord over England. John of Gaunt's age was then thirty-seven, Chaucer's forty-nine.

In January, 1378, Sir Guichard d'Angle, then Earl of Huntingdon, was sent with two others on embassy to France, and this time their declared business was to treat of Richard's marriage. Chaucer received afterwards his payments for attendance on that mission.

The poet's annuity of twenty marks was confirmed under the new reign, and it was now that another annuity of twenty marks (140*l.*) a year was granted instead of the daily pitcher of wine.

Not many weeks after his return from France, namely in May of the same year 1378, Chaucer was sent abroad again on diplomatic service. His errand was then to Lombardy with Sir Edward Berkeley, to treat with Bernardo Visconti, Lord of Milan, and Sir John Hawkwood, "on certain affairs touching the

expediting of the king's war." Chaucer had for this service letters of protection on the 10th of May to be in force till Christmas. Sir Edward Berkeley received 130*l.* 6*s.* 8*d.*, Chaucer 56*l.* 13*s.* 4*d.* (respectively above 1300*l.* and about 566*l.*) for wages and expenses. It was as one of two representatives during his absence in this year 1378 (the other representative being a forgotten Richard Forrester) that Chaucer named his friend John Gower,—who had not yet written either of his great extant poems,—to appear for him in the courts, in case of any legal proceedings being instituted against him during his absence.

At the beginning of February in the next year, 1379, Chaucer was in town, drawing his pension with his own hands. In May he was out of town; in December he drew his money again personally. In July, 1380, he was out of town. In the following November he drew personally his pensions, besides wages and expenses for his mission in Lombardy. In the following March (1381) he received also wages and expenses on account of his mission to France in 1377. The delayed payments perhaps indicate the state of the exchequer in the years before the poll-tax which produced the Wat Tyler insurrection of this year 1381.

On the 8th of May, 1382, while still holding his office of Comptroller of Wool Customs, Chaucer was appointed also Comptroller of the Petty Customs in the Port of London, during pleasure, with the accustomed wages, and a liberty to execute the office by sufficient deputy.

In November, 1384, he was allowed to absent himself for a month, and serve for that time by deputy also in the Wool Customs, on account of his own urgent affairs; and on the 17th of February, 1385, he was released from all the bondage in connexion with his salaries, by being allowed to nominate a permanent deputy in the office, to which he had been tied so closely, of Comptroller of the Customs and Subsidy of Wool, Skins, and Tanned Hides in the Port of London.

John Wiclif was then newly dead; Gower had just written his '*Vox Clamantis*,' and Chaucer was fifty-seven years old, but he had not yet written the '*Canterbury Tales*.' The leisure obtained by this exemption from personal attendance at his office probably gave him courage for the planning of a greater

work than he had yet attempted as a poet; for it is to some date after the next year 1386, that the 'Canterbury Tales' belong.

There has been connected with the years of Chaucer's life just chronicled, a reading of one part of his 'Testament of Love' into incidents of exile and imprisonment. He is said¹ to have taken active part in the dispute between King Richard II. and the citizens of London, when, in 1384, they set up John of Northampton as their mayor, instead of a mayor of the king's providing. John of Northampton was arrested, and Chaucer is said to have gone into voluntary exile in 1385. It is added that he passed as exile from his father-in-law's province of Hainault to live in the province of Zealand, while he was allowed to retain at home his places under government, and even specially privileged to perform their duties by deputy. Nevertheless, by the desertion and misconduct of friends he is said to have been deprived of his income, to have suffered destitution during exile, and on his return to have been arrested by the court, imprisoned in the Tower, and presently dismissed from his public offices. The passages in the 'Testament of Love,' on which this theory is built are, I think, autobiographical; but I believe that they have been referred to a wrong date. Chaucer was in London, drawing his pension every half-year with his own hands, from 1380 to 1388, and he was manifestly in enjoyment of court favour when he was allowed to appoint a permanent deputy to an office, in which personal service was a strict condition. This happened a few months before the king made two of his uncles Dukes of York and Gloucester, and made the son of John of Gaunt and Duchess Blanche, Henry of Bolingbroke, the Earl of Derby. On the other hand, Chaucer's loss of his offices we shall find fully accounted for without help from John of Northampton.

In 1386 Geoffrey Chaucer sat as one of the members for Kent in the Parliament which met on the 1st of October; he and his colleague William Betenham being allowed for their

¹ Following the Life by Dart, corrected by W. Thomas, prefixed to Urry's edition, this is said by Tyrwhit, and in Godwin's 'Life of Chaucer,' vol. iii. cap. 49, vol. iv. cap. 1. Sir Harris Nicolas points out the facts that are irreconcilable with the acceptance of this notion.

expenses at the rate of eight shillings (4*l.*) a day for sixty-one days.

The French were then threatening England with invasion, and the great barons headed by the king's uncle, the Duke of Gloucester, whom Gower honoured as "the Swan," were active for overthrow of the king's corrupt administration. In the Parliament to which the poet was sent as Knight of the Shire for Kent, there arose out of this movement a great trial of the strength of parties, and, after a struggle of three weeks, Richard was compelled to abandon his Chancellor, the Earl of Suffolk, to a prosecution by the Commons, which ended in his being acquitted of four charges, and condemned on others to certain forfeits and imprisonment during the king's pleasure. In the next place the king was forced also to appoint a permanent council, including Gloucester and the Earl of Arundel—the Swan and the Horse—to inquire into the conduct of officials of all kinds, and into gifts and pardons granted, to hear and decide on all griefs of the people, which could not be redressed by common course of law, and to provide for all abuses such remedies as might seem to them good and profitable. Richard assented to the establishment of such a commission of Regency for twelve months.¹ The commissioners, reluctantly appointed on the 19th of November, began their labours with examination of the accounts of officers employed in the collection of the revenue. On the 4th of December Chaucer was dismissed from his office of Comptroller of the Customs and Subsidies of Wools, Skins, and Tanned Hides; and his place given to one Adam Yerdeley. Ten days later Chaucer was discharged also from his other office, and a Henry Gisors was made, in his place, Comptroller of the Petty Customs in the Port of London.

During all this time Chaucer's patron John of Gaunt was away with an army in Portugal, upon affairs arising out of his relation to Castile. He remained absent in 1387, for in that year, after an unfortunate campaign, he was compelled to quit Portugal and stay in Guienne, while he achieved by policy what he had sought by arms. He procured in 1388 the marriage of

¹ See Gower's account of this, in the 'Tripartite Chronicle,' described in p. 102.

Catherine, his only daughter by his wife Constance, and inheritor of her pretensions to the Spanish crown, to Henry, son and heir of the reigning King of Castile; and from this couple, established thus as Prince and Princess of Asturias, descended the line of Spanish sovereigns for many generations. John of Gaunt was thus absent upon his own affairs until December, 1389.

It was after his dismissal in 1386 that Chaucer wrote his 'Canterbury Tales.' He had laid by no gold in the days of his prosperity, for in the second year of adversity he was obliged to raise money upon his two pensions, which, on the 1st of May, 1388, were cancelled and assigned to a John Scalby. This probably is the season of distress indicated by Chaucer in the 'Testament of Love,' which it has been supposed that he wrote as a prisoner in the Tower in the year 1389.

It was in May, 1389, that King Richard II. suddenly asked his uncle Gloucester how old he was, and, being told that he was in his twenty-second year, said he must then certainly be of age to manage his own concerns, dismissed his council, took the government into his own hands, and left his uncle Gloucester to retire into the country, while John of Gaunt was desired to return to England. By this court revolution Chaucer profited. On the 12th of July in the same year he was appointed Clerk of the Works at the Palace of Westminster, Tower of London, Castle of Berkhamstead, the king's manors of Kennington, Eltham, Clarendon, Sheen, Byfleet, Childern Langley, and Feckenham; at the Royal Lodge of Hatherberg in the New Forest, at the Lodges in the Parks of Clarendon, Childern Langley, and Feckenham; and at the mews for the king's falcons at Charing Cross. He might serve by deputy, and his salary was two shillings (= about 1*l.*) a day.

In November, 1389, John of Gaunt returned to London, with mules loaded with chests of gold, part payment of indemnification for the expenses of his expedition. Chaucer, remaining the king's Clerk of the Works, in July, 1390, was commanded to procure workmen and materials for the repair of St. George's Chapel at Windsor. In January, 1391, he was allowed to appoint John Elmhurst as his deputy for repairs to be made at the Palace of Westminster and Tower of London; but before the middle of September in the same year he had ceased to

hold office, John Gadney being then Clerk of the King's Works in place of Geoffrey Chaucer, the reason of whose retirement or dismissal is not known.

Withdrawal from this office seems to have left Chaucer with no other income than the 10*l.* (now 100*l.*) a year for life granted to him by the Duke of Lancaster, in 1374, and his allowance of 40*s.* (20*l.*) half-yearly for robes, as the King's Esquire.

On the 28th February, 1394, Chaucer obtained a grant from the king of 20*l.* (= 200*l.*) a year for life, payable half-yearly at Easter and Michaelmas, and several advances from the exchequer made to Chaucer upon personal application, as loans on the current half-year's pension,¹ show that he had no money in reserve.

In 1395 or 1396 Chaucer was one of the attorneys of Gregory Ballard, to receive seisin of the manor of Spitelcombe and other lands in Kent.

On the 4th of May, 1398, Chaucer obtained the king's letters of protection, on the ground of his appointment to "various arduous and urgent duties in divers parts of the realm of England," forbidding any one to sue or arrest him on any plea, except it were connected with land, for the term of two years. The records of the payment of his pension at this period of his life show that, whether because of sickness or of occupations out of London, he did not apply for it, or for the loans on account of it, personally. In the July following the May in which he received letters of protection, Chaucer sent to the Exchequer on the 24th and on the 31st for loans of six and eight pence, say of three pounds six and eight pence at the present rate of money value. But three months later, on the 15th of October, 1398, the poet received another grant of wine, a tun a year, during his life, dating from the previous December.

The next year, 1399, was the year of the death of John of Gaunt, followed by the rapid rise to the throne of his son and

¹ On the 1st of April, 1395, he borrowed of the Exchequer 10*l.* (100*l.*),—repaid on the 28th of May following; on the 25th June he borrowed 10*l.* (100*l.*); on the 9th of September, 1*l.* 6*s.* 8*d.* (13*l.* 6*s.* 8*d.*); on the 27th of November, 8*l.* 6*s.* 8*d.* (83*l.* 6*s.* 8*d.*). On the 1st of March, 1396, 1*l.* 13*s.* 4*d.* (16*l.* 13*s.* 4*d.*) was the balance left to be paid to him, after deducting the advances of the previous half-year.—Sir Harris Nicolas: from the Issue Rolls.

heir, Henry of Bolingbroke, who was crowned as King Henry IV. on the 13th of October, within a fortnight after the deposition of his predecessor.

One of the first acts of John of Gaunt's son, after his accession to the throne, was the doubling of Chaucer's pension. The deposition of Richard was on the last day of September, and on the third of October the new sovereign, who from his childhood up must have been personally familiar with Chaucer in his father's house, granted the old poet forty marks (280*l.*) a year, in addition to the annuity of 20*l.* (200*l.*) which King Richard had given him.

Next Christmas Eve Chaucer, poor no more, took a fifty-three years' lease of a house in the garden of the chapel of St. Mary, Westminster. He took the house for that term of the monk of St. Mary's, Robert Hermodesworth, with the consent of the abbot and convent of Westminster. The yearly rent was of 2*l.* 13*s.* 4*d.* (26*l.* 13*s.* 4*d.*), with power to the lessor to distrain, if any part of the rent remained for fifteen days unpaid, and with reversion of the premises to the Custos of the chapel on the death of the lessee. The poet was then seventy-one years old, and he did not complete a year's occupation of this house under the shadow of the Abbey. On the 25th of October, 1400, if Nicholas Brigham's description on the monument be trustworthy, Chaucer died and was received into that other house under the shadow of the Abbey, which his dust now occupies. It was the year in which old Gower became blind, and very soon afterwards ceased from writing. The Exchequer-rolls corroborate the date assigned to Chaucer's death; no note of payment being found later than the 1st of March in the year 1400. If he had not died soon after the September money became due, there would have been note found of its payment.

Geoffrey Chaucer is said to have lived not only at Woodstock but also at Donington Castle in Leicestershire, where there used to be an old oak, called Chaucer's Oak. But these traditions, so far as they have any foundation, probably should be referred to his son Thomas, born about the year 1367, who married between December, 1391, and 1404, a daughter of Sir John Burghersh, with whom he acquired large estates in Oxfordshire and other counties. He received grants both from Richard II. and from

John of Gaunt, was advanced by Henry IV., from whose queen he received the farm of Woodstock, ten years after his father's death. Thomas Chaucer was a most prosperous man; he died in November, 1434, leaving a daughter Alice, born about 1404, whose third husband, by whom only she had children, was William de la Pole, Earl of Suffolk. Their eldest son John married the sister of King Edward IV.; and the eldest son of that marriage, John de la Pole, created Earl of Lincoln, was declared by Richard III. heir-apparent in the event of the death of the Prince of Wales without issue. John de la Pole was killed at the battle of Stoke in 1487, and he died childless. Thus the last of Chaucer's race was the great-great-grandson of the poet, one who stood so near the throne that, through him, Chaucer might have been forefather to a line of English kings.

Thomas was not the poet's only child. To another son, named Lewis, he indited his treatise on the 'Astrolabe.' He is supposed also to have been the father of Elizabeth Chaucer, on behalf of whom, in May, 1381, the Duke of Lancaster paid 51*l.* 8*s.* 2*d.* (514*l.*) for her novitiate in the Abbey of Barking in Essex.

The series of Chaucer's writings is considered to begin with 'The Court of Love.' This poem celebrates his ^{The Court of Love.} entrance into the company to which in one of his latest works, 'The Testament of Love,' he bids farewell. The plan of Chaucer's 'Court of Love' is kindred to that of the French 'Romaunt of the Rose,' parent and chief of a large family of rhymed love allegories. For the mystical Rose young Chaucer substituted, as the poet's object of desire, a fair lady, named Rosial, who is made after the pattern of the Dame Oyseuse of the 'Roman de la Rose,' or the Emilie whom Boccaccio drew to a like pattern in the 'Theseid.' Bel-Accueil has her double, in form of the poet's companion and guide, the little Philobone; there is in each poem a code of lover's laws; and the experiences of youth in the domain of love are represented in both works by allegorical characters. These also correspond nearly enough to show that as the voice of the old throstle sets the young bird warbling, so it was the trill of the 'Roman de la Rose' that first taught our Chaucer to use his inborn faculty of song. In this poem of his youth,

'The Court of Love,'

after profession of a want of skill in verse or craft of Galfride,—that is, skill according to the 'Nova Poetica' of Geoffrey of Vinsauf,¹—Chaucer asks help of Minerva and the muses, desiring only to please his

"Lady stable, true and sure."

Then he begins by telling that when he was eighteen years old he was commanded to go to the Court of Love, where Venus was the goddess worshipped, and her son Cupid also was a mighty god. He enquired his way till he was among people swarming thitherward as bees, of whom one told him that Love's Court was held at Cythera. There, indeed, he found a rich and royal castle stretching to heaven, and painted within and without with daisies, red and white, the flower of the Queen Alcestis, who dwelt there with Admetus, as, under Venus, sovereigns of the place. They were obeyed by nineteen good ladies, and many a thousand others, and sat, crowned in state, with Danger standing near the King, and Disdain near the Queen of Love, to whose beauty, the poet, offered homage in his inward thought. But he knew not what he must do until he spied a friend at Court in Philobone, a gentlewoman who was chamberer to the queen, and who loved all her life. She, seeing the poet, led him forth, and asked him how he had come thither, and upon what errand? To see the Court, he answered; and ask pardon for having delayed so long to come. That is well said, quoth Philobone, but were you not summoned by Mercury? He was. Then, since he should have come of his free will and did not so, it might go ill with him; she feared he would be shent. A young man's duty is to repair to the Court of Love as soon as he knows a woman from a swan.

"No force iwis, I stirred you longe agon
To drawe to Courte, quod litil Philobon."

Being further terrified with dread of chastisement for negligence, the poet declared himself humble. Then he was taken by Philobone into the Temple of Venus, where he saw people of all countries and conditions of life worshipping the goddess. Presently a message from the king commanded the new comers to appear before him. The poet went trembling:—

"And at the last the king hath me behold
With sterne viságe and seid, what doth this olde,

Thus ferre ystope in yeris, come so late
Unto the Courte? For sothe my liege (quod I)
An hundred tyme I have ben at the gate
Afore this time, yet coude I ner espie
Of myne acqueintaunce eny in mine eye,
And shamefastnes away me gaune to chase,
But now I me submitte unto your grace."

¹ See Book I. chap. xvii.

No inference as to Chaucer's age when he wrote the poem can be fairly drawn from the age of eighteen ascribed in the allegory to the youth making his first appearance at the Court of Love. But although it might be an old man's playfulness, yet the notion of being heart-whole at the great age of eighteen reads like the pleasant wonder of a singer yet mounting the first green slope of the hill of life, for whom, in fresh enjoyment of the widening view, the sense of height attained is proud and strong. The King of Love pardoned the aged poet of eighteen for his lateness of appearance, on condition that he should thenceforth be true in Love's service. An officer was then ordered to read to him and to the other new comers the twenty statutes of the Court:—

Each lover (1) shall be true and faithful to the King of Love; (2) keep counsel and be true and kind to his lady; (3) be constant; (4) enlarge the rule and honour of love; (5) be harmless under cross; (6) meditate when in solitude upon his lady and his suit; (7) bear all her moods; (8) labour hourly in speech and prayer for her love; (9) not over bold to displease her, and bearing all her chastisements; (10) he shall account himself to have no right to her mercy; (11) serve secretly, not ostentatiously; (12) welcome all wounds received in her service; (13) study to please her with ungrudging gifts; (14) believe no ill of her, and if a fault be seen "excuse it blive and glose it pretilie;" (15) he must lie, if necessary, to protect her honour; (16) he must be, after the flesh, a lusty man; (17), retain in old age dalliance of lover's speech; (18) he must eschew sluttishness in dress and person; (19) fast every other day for love; and (20) when the lady is absent it will be his duty "to wring and wail, to turn, and sigh, and groan."

An officer of the Court of Love, named Rigour, took the oath of the new comers to obey these laws as fully as they could; and, at this part of the ceremony, the poet, with the statute book in his hand, open at the laws to which he swore allegiance, was turning over the next leaves, when he was heavily rebuked. Rigour himself is not allowed to look into the leaves which contain the statutes of Love which rule women.

"In secret wise thei kepen ben full close
Thei soune echone to libertë my frende;
Pleasaunt thei be, and to their own purpöse;
There wote no wight of them but God and fende."

Having sworn to obey the statutes made for their own government as well as they could, the poet and his companions were sent to pray for help and comfort in the Temple of Cythereia. There, when he had heard the prayer of the doleful lovers and the song of the thousand million who rejoice in love and lead their lives in bliss, the poet paid his own vow as he prayed to have a fitting mate; and then he vowed him,

"faithful, true, and kind,
Without offence of mutabilitie,
Humbly to serve while I have wit and mind."

After his prayer and praise, he rose; and as he went in the temple he saw a rich jewelled shrine, of which Philobone, when he met with her, told him that it was the tomb of Pity, who had died of seeing an eagle wreak

him on a fly. Had Pity lived she would have been the lover's best help. But she is dead. Instead of her, it is hot Courage who speeds the matters of the Court. Philobone further told the poet, as a great secret, that however women may say that Pity causes them to consent to take a lover's service, they are not to be won by wailing and weeping.

Now Philobone will take the poet to see the fairest lady under the sun. Her name is Rosial. Her beauty is described at length. It is so great that the new comer declares at once his passion of love to her. She replies as not to be won by him so instantly. She does not even know his name and condition.

"In art of love I write and songis make,
That maie be song in honour of the kyng
And quene of Love, and then I undertake
He that is sad shall them full mery syng."

But his name?

"My name, alas, my herte! why makes thou strange?
Philogenet I cal'd am farre and nere,
Of Cambridge clerke, that nevyr thinke to chaunge
Fro you."

After more dialogue Rosial still rebukes his boldness; but when at last Philogenet swoons, "with colour slaine and wanne as ashē pale," she knows him by his hue to be a lover, and so promises to set his heart at ease.

The allegory, dealing everywhere else in general personifications, did not require that Philogenet should define himself particularly as "of Cambridge, Clerk;" and it is, therefore, probable that Chaucer, writing this poem in his youth, ascribed to Philogenet his own condition of life.

Rosial, having assented to this love of Philogenet, bade Philobone take him about the Court of Love, and show who were its officers and its attendants. Philobone obeyed, and the rest of the poem moves among allegorical personages attendant on the State of Love,—Despair, Hope, Lust, and True Delight, Dissembling, Shamefastness, Vaunter, Envy, Secret Thought. The poet has heard during his round the lamentation of the monks and nuns. Among the persons of the allegory there appear the Golden and the Leaden Love;—but here, though the text runs continuously, there is a manifest break in the sense. A piece of the poem is deficient, and we pass to the closing lines of another dialogue with Rosial, upon whom we come¹ suddenly while she is telling Philogenet how Pity rose from the dead to whisper in her ear that she was not to drive away her servant. At which her servant [anything Philobone may have told him notwithstanding, and being bound to believe his lady,] duly expresses his thanks to Pity, who rose from death to live for him, makes

¹ At the stanza beginning "Yes, draw your heart with all your force." Obvious as is the omission of a fragment of the poem at this place—so obvious that it cannot pass unobserved by an attentive reader—I know no writer upon Chaucer who has mentioned it.

his protestation of fidelity to Rosial and is to abide with her till the season of May, when the King of Love will hold feast and all the birds sing Matins.

The Matins of the birds pleasantly applied out of the Church Service close the poem as with a full choir of nature's own sweet music. The nightingale, "within a temple shapen hawthornwise," sang *Domine labia*,—"O Lord of Love open thou our lips!" The eagle sang *Venite*—"O come let us sing unto the Lord." The popinjay sang "The Heavens are telling," and the goldfinch "The Earth is the Lord's." The robin redbreast read the second lesson. The throstle sang *Te Deum*, and the lark *Laudate*,—"Praise ye the Lord." At the end of the service of the birds, all who were of the Court of Love gathered fresh flowers, which they threw at one another. As the poet saw that royal sight, his lady suddenly looked on him and plighted him her true love, whereby he was struck through the very heart; and yet he is alive.

The measure to which Chaucer wrote the verse of his 'Court of Love' is a stanza of seven lines of heroics, with three rhymes, the first two alternating in a quatrain, the rhyme of the fourth line repeated in the fifth, and the third rhyme forming the sixth and seventh lines into a couplet. This stanza was used, but with a restriction to two rhymes, by Jehan de Brienne, King of Jerusalem, more than a century before the birth of Boccaccio. In England it was afterwards called rhyme royal, from its use, not many years after the death of Chaucer, by the captive King of Scotland, James I., as the measure of "the King's Quair."

Apart from the usual influence of the literature read in his own time, which should be manifest in the work of every young writer, Chaucer's 'Court of Love' is an original poem, into which he put the breath of his own life. Its allegory is no servile copy of other men's inventions, and it stops short of the prolixity usual in the refinements of the school from which it came. The verse has its own music, joyous, firm, elastic. A smooth measure—marred for us now sometimes by bad copying, and often by bad reading—was the common property of all the rhyming of the fourteenth century. But here, as in Chaucer's later verse, there is a rhythm of health in the beat of his music. The rhyming is unstrained, the clear stream of thought falls naturally into song, of which the cadences are not less felt to be an impulse of Heaven's gift ministering to man's health and pleasure, than the wind's tree-music, or the rush and rattle of the waves. In this first poem of Chaucer's, too, as in the 'Canterbury Tales,' there is a practical, good-humoured simplicity of

thought, that is as the salt which seasons all his sentiment and keeps the rot out. In the 'Court of Love,' as Boccaccio gave Troilus the name of Philostrate, with the sense Soldier of Love, Chaucer called his hero Philogenet, as born to love (compounding after the same fashion *φιλία*, love, with *γενετή*, birth, or with the aorist, *γένετο*). In the name of Philobone he blends Latin with Greek, to call the damsel good, and he gives rule under Venus to Admetus and Alcestis. His King and Queen of Love are—the husband who yoked boars and lions to the car that took him to a wife willing to die that he might live; the wife whose love was capable of utmost sacrifice, and who was worthy to be brought back to her husband from the grave. Nobody before young Chaucer had made this couple, under Venus, King and Queen of Love. The courtly belief of his time was, we shall find, that marriage lies beyond the bounds of love.

The Daisy, that Chaucer made, as emblem of love, the flower of Alcestis, had been connected by French poets before him as the flower of love with heroines of love less pure and noble. Machault, in his 'Dit de la Marguerite,'¹ had recently sung its praises as the flower of the lover, opening and turning to the light of its sun, and closing when the light departs from it. Froissart, too, in his 'Dittie de la Flour de la Margherite,'² joined in praise of the daisy as the flower of flowers. Machault cited among its merits that its sweet root cures the pains of love, and that its scent produces love; Froissart said that the flower gives a sweetheart to the man who has none. Indeed, in the medicine of that time, and of some centuries later, the daisy was considered to have a cooling, moistening, and healing power, good for sore eyes, and most especially for inward hurts, broken hearts for example.³ It was wonderfully good, too, for the

¹ 'Poésies de Guillaume de Machault.' Reims, 1849, p. 123-129. In P. Tarbé's 'Collection des Poètes Champanois antérieurs au xvi siècle.' It is much to be regretted that, in accordance with a very stupid practice among literary antiquaries who pride themselves in maintaining the scarcity of good old books,—and indeed often value a scarce book that has no wit in it more highly than a good one that is easy of access,—this issue of the works of Machault was limited to 250 copies.

² 'Poésies de J. Froissart, extraites de deux manuscrits et publiées pour la première fois,' par J. A. Buchon. Paris, 1829, p. 124-130.

³ "Ist ein herrlich Wundkräutlein . . . thut aber fürnemlich gut denen,

head, and for lame limbs. It cleansed the system, set flowing again the thickened juices. Only to hold a daisy in the hand was thought to cure spitting of blood or bleeding at the nose, and its soothing and invigorating power, long after Chaucer's time, was so much honoured, that an enthusiastic army physician¹ said he would wish to have the praises of the Daisy—that in all fields and meadows, summer and winter, remains by God's merciful provision fresh and green for the use of men—inscribed on every gate and door, for the good of the poor harvesters, who might save their lives instead of killing themselves with raw and cold drinks; for they would get, even before they left the field, immediate relief and comfort from the daisy. In this manifold sense Chaucer, accepting the praise of the daisy, made the flower the type of Alcestis, of wedded love. In humility, in its white purity, in its ever faithful following of the light of the sun, whereof it bore the image at its heart, it was the cleanser of all perilous stuff, restorer of the clear current of life, healer of wounds, soother of pain.

The Laws of Chaucer's 'Court of Love' are, in part, playfully adapted from those of the *Cours d'Amour*, which were cited and incidentally described in the twelfth century by a chaplain of the French court named André, in a book 'On the Art of Loving and the Reprobation of Love'²

To justify his decisions upon questions examined in his 'Art of Loving,' André quotes the Courts of Love of the ladies of Gascony; of Ermengard, Viscountess of Narbonne; of the patroness of Bernard of Ventadour; of Queen Eleanor of Aquitaine, married first, in 1137, to Louis VII. of France, and afterwards wife of Henry II. of England; of Eleanor's daughter by the French King, Marie of France, Countess of Champagne; and of the Countess of Flanders. The troubadours, and their

die in dem Leibe etwas zerstoßen, oder zerbrochen haben."—'Zedler's Universal Lexikon.' Anno 1733.

¹ Raymond Minderer in 'Medicina Militaris. Das ist Gemeine Handtstücklein zur Kriegs-Artzney gehörig.' 1634. There are three pages (57-60) written in warm and devout recognition of the virtues of the daisy.

² 'De Arte Amatoriâ, et Reprobatione Amoris,' quoted by Raynouard, who derived from it, and from Jean of Nôtre Dame, his account of the 'Cours d'Amour.' 'Poésies des Troubadours,' (Paris, 1817) Tom. II. pp. lxxix.-cxxiv. On this subject I follow Raynouard.

historian, Jean of Notre Dame, speak of the Courts of Love established in Provence at Pierrefeu and Signe—probably one court held indifferently at either of the neighbouring châteaux—at Romanin, where, in her time, an aunt of Petrarch's Laura is said to have presided, and at Avignon. Jean of Notre Dame,¹ living in the sixteenth century, names the ladies who gave judgment in those courts, and on the authority of a catalogue of Provençal poets by a monk of the Isle d'Or, says, that Laura's aunt, Phanette des Gantelmes, Dame de Romanin, had a fury or inspiration of poesy, a true gift of God, and that, at Avignon, Laura herself was a prompt romancer in all sorts of Provençal rhyme. In their tensons—in which poets and ladies contended touching difficult points in the etiquette of love-poems, called *tenson*, from the Latin *contensionem*, contending or debate,—the troubadours often named the ladies of whom they asked that judgment should be given on the question argued; or a constituted open Court of Love gave upon such controversies its “arrests d'amours.” Sometimes dissatisfied poets carried their appeal from the decision of one Love Court to the hearing of another.

From the middle of the twelfth century until after the death of Chaucer these Courts of Love existed both in Northern and in Southern France. In a love cause brought before the Countess of Champagne, it is said that there was a court of sixty ladies, and one significant question brought before that court is also on record, and is this: Can true love exist between those who are married to each other? Nostradamus speaks of a court of ten ladies at Signe, of a court of twelve ladies at Romanin, and of a court of fourteen ladies at Avignon. André says that the Code established by the King of Love, and found, by a Breton knight and lover, tied to the foot of a falcon in King Arthur's Court, was formally adopted by a court composed of many ladies and knights, all lovers being enjoined under penalties thenceforth to observe it exactly. With their code, their precedents, and their occasional decisions, these Courts of Love mimicked the Courts of Law. They gave the grounds of their decision in

¹ ‘Vies des plus célèbres et anciens poètes Provençaux;’ Lyon, 1575, by Jean de Notre Dame or Nostradamus. Cited through Raynouard.

pronouncing judgments, and these were sometimes based on the authority of the General Code. It was a code of thirty-one articles, and although the twenty statutes of Chaucer's ideal 'Court of Love' are given as with a roguish twinkle in the eye, the short, seriously-worded sentences in the Code of the French Courts pretty closely answer to them.

The first law, however, of the French Code,—“Marriage does not excuse from love,”—as interpreted by the Love Courts, is opposed to Chaucer's first law, of fidelity to a King of Love in whom wedlock is personified. For the answer of the Court of Champagne to the question, Can true love exist in marriage? was, that love and wedlock are things so entirely different, that married folks are not under the rule of love. Again, upon the question being put to the Court of Ermengard, Viscountess of Narbonne, whether a lady in engagement of love to one knight might withdraw her accustomed favours on her marriage with another, the court decided that the marital tie did not exclude the rights of the previous attachment. Again, a lady engaged in love to one knight, promised to bestow her favours on another if she ever lost the love of the one. She married her first love, and the other knight thereupon claimed the fulfilment of her conditional promise. The Court of Queen Eleanor sustained his claim, saying, “We do not venture to contradict the decision of the Countess of Champagne, who, by a solemn judgment, has pronounced that true love cannot exist between those who are married to each other.”

The second law of the French Code, “He who cannot hide cannot love,” answers to Chaucer's second law, of the true lover's keeping of the counsel of his mistress. Chaucer's third law,—of Constancy,—is also the third of the French Code, “Nobody can be bound in a double love.” Chaucer proceeds, varying at will, and playfully extending those laws of love which he knows to be the ordinance of the French love courts, and upon which he has read variations in the ‘Roman de la Rose.’ In each one of the codes—that of the Love Courts, that of the ‘Roman de la Rose,’ and that of Chaucer's poem, there are laws differing one from another in phrase more than in purport. All ordain faithfulness to one, following Ovid's rule,—

“Elige cui dicas, Tu mihi sola places.”

In all three, secrecy is the second law of love. The Code of the French Courts of Love ordains, by Article 10, that the lover shall be liberal of gifts, in saying that love is exiled from the house of avarice; by Article 15, it holds that the lover grows pale in the presence of the beloved; and by the 16th, that the lover's heart beats at the sudden sight of the beloved. The twentieth law declares the lover timid; the twenty-third, that he eats and drinks less than other people; and the thirtieth, that he is always occupied by the image of his lady. This code holds also that the true lover counts nothing happy but that which will please the beloved, that love can deny love nothing, and can know no surfeit, and that a man should not love until he has attained full puberty. The eleventh law decrees that it is unbecoming to love where one would be ashamed to marry. Not that a lover should marry, but that he should have proper regard to rank. The code given by Love to the Lover in the 'Roman de la Rose' contains Chaucer's eighteenth law on the avoidance of sluttishness. Chaucer's fifth statute bids the unhappy lover turn and wallow in his bed and weep. Love in the 'Roman de la Rose' bids him fidget in bed as if he had the toothache.¹ "There is no lover so poor," says Love in that poem, "that he cannot wear a chaplet of flowers, wash his hands, clean his teeth, and see that there is no black under his nails."² But the first source of all this—even to the "sint sine sordibus unguis"—is Ovid, in his three books of the 'Art of Love,' a poem then familiar to all educated readers.

In his 'Court of Love,' Chaucer's description of the Lady Rosial is said to have been suggested by Boccaccio's description,

¹ "Car quant tu cuideras dormir,
 Tu commenceras a fremir,
 A tresailir, à demener
 Sor costé t'estovra torner,
 Une heure envers, autre heure adens
 Cum fait hons qui a mal as dents."

'Roman de la Rose,' vv. 2438-43.

² Love says to the lover,—

"Ne sueffre sor toi nul ordure,
 Lave tes mains, et tes dens cure :
 S'en tes ongles a point de noir,
 Ne l'i lesse pas remanoir."—'Roman de la Rose,' vv. 2175-8.

in the last book of the 'Teseide,'¹ of Emilia on her way to the Temple of Venus, where her beauty was accounted peerless. Of each lady there is a corresponding catalogue of charms, each is richly arrayed in green; and although Chaucer's briefer catalogue contains no passage of literal translation, it has closer resemblance to the stanzas in Boccaccio than to the lines in the 'Roman de la Rose' describing Dame Oyseuse² dressed also in green, from which Boccaccio is supposed to have taken the suggestion of his picture of Emilia. But there are so many unavoidable points of resemblance in detailed description of a beauty, that there would be need of minuter correspondence than we find, to prove that the three descriptions were not written without particular reference one to another. The rich green dress is the point of closest contact; but that it was rich was a condition of courtly poetry, and green was, according to the astrologers, a colour of Venus, besides that when love was connected usually with the face of nature in the spring, it was the colour in which most poets would array a love personified.

But if Chaucer's imitation of Boccaccio be in this instance doubtful, there is no doubt whatever that he had read in Boccaccio's 'Filostrato' the glad song of Troilus to Venus,³ when he lived in joy with Cressida while Troy was sad, and when he sang "so that his soul seemed to be parting from him." Philogenet's song to Rosial, beginning—

"O ye fresh lovelie, of beauty the rote,"

contains, apart from general accord of the music, and a direct reference to Troilus by the singer, who will "ben as Troilus, Troie's worthy knight," a passage or two of directly imitated melody.⁴ Upon another point, that must not be passed over, this

¹ 'Teseide,' lib. xii. st. 53-65. I am referred to this passage and to that next cited in the 'Filostrato,' by the 'Étude sur G. Chaucer considéré comme imitateur des Trouvères' of E. G. Sandras (Paris, 1859), a writer to whose research I am indebted for many valuable references and suggestions.

² 'Roman de la Rose,' vv. 520-575.

³ 'Il Filostrato,' part iv. st. 67-81.

⁴ Boccaccio sings,—

"Amerò sempre col maggiore affetto,
Che solo amar mia donna piace aggrada;
Con essa incontro tutto il mio diletto,
E par che l'alma mia con lei sol vada,
E con lei sola provi ardor perfetto,
E fuor di questo ogn' altro si disgrada;

poem suggests a comment that will apply generally to many later writings. For easy as it may be to trace, as I hope to trace, the course of the best mind of England, without overstepping the conventional line that parts things which are to be called by their right names from things which may only be named evasively, the student of our early literature must not be left unwarned of the fact that this boundary-line has been often shifted, and that in the time of Chaucer it did not exist. No common gift or ordinance of God to man was then thought unfit to be named, and no mock-secret was made of the commonest of human knowledge. The critic who reads on the surface of a page may lift up his eyes at the unblushing simplicity with which our Chaucer gives a playful version of his sixteenth law of the 'Court of Love,' and afterwards refers to it. There is nothing of this in Guillaume de Lorris's part of the 'Roman de la Rose.' But let the English reader, true to the mind of his country, when he is startled by plain speaking or jesting in man or book, boldly apply to it the highest and the truest test, Would this offend God? If it were read in the

Ti seguirò pertanto, e notto e giorno,
 Mio dolce amore, d' ogni grazia adorno.
 Io benedico l' anno, il tempo, e il mese,
 Il giorno, l' ora, e il punto, che costei
 Onesta bella, leggiadra e cortese,
 La prima volta apparve agl' occhj miei;
 E benedico il fuoco ch'è mi accese
 Del suo valor, delle virtù di lei,
 Onde, fatto di lei servo verace,
 In lei sola ritrovo la mia pace."

From Chaucer we have this sweet echo :—

"For by my troth, the day is of my breth
 I am and will be your, in witt and herte,
 Patient and meke for you to suffer deth,
 If it require, now rue upon my smerte,
 And this I swere, I nevyr shall out sterte
 From lovës courte, for none adversitie,
 So ye would rue on my distresse and me.
 My destinie, my fate, and houre I blisse,
 That have me set to ben obedient
 Onely to you the floure of all ywis;
 I trust to Venus nevyr to repent,
 For evir redy, glad, and diligent,
 Ye shall me finde in service to your grace,
 Till deth my life out of my body rase."

assembly of the perfect, where there can be no false shame, and where nothing of God's making or ordinance is accounted common or unclean, would the plain speaking be held true, and the jest guiltless? The two or three passages in Chaucer's 'Court of Love' that we might try by such a test will bear it. For the poem is an honest one, essentially purer in design than the 'Romaunt of the Rose,' in which the Rose sought so ardently, although it has been applied by metaphor to many things, including the highest and the best, was meant only for the symbol of the inmost fortress of a woman's honour. Chaucer, as a youth, saw the true glory of love in a devoted wife; he sang then of Alcestis, and in his maturest years still the devoted wife was his ideal of love, when he sang of the pure meekness of Griselda. Profanity has been seen also¹ in the delicious closing burst of gladness in this poem of Chaucer's, the adaptation of church ritual to the matins of the birds on a May morning, who sang "within a temple shapen hawthornwise" their praises to the Lord of Love. But let any one take his Chaucer with him into the woods on a May morning, and while the quire of the birds is loud in joyous song, as the sunlight brightens the young leaves and makes easy way, through the thin foliage and swelling buds, to the grass blades that are almost lost in the tender throng of the wild flowers; then let him read Chaucer's matins of the birds, know how its spirit is attuned to the glad strain, and feel the sense there is in it that God is Love.

Among the Fabliaux and tales of the thirteenth century,² is one by a minstrel named Jean, of Condé in Hainault, 'Des Chanoinesses et des Bernardines,' in which Venus herself holds a Court, to which lovers bring their complaints. The fabliau shows how the noble canonesses in white, long-trained robes of fine linen, lay a complaint that their well-born lovers, the

¹ M. Sandras, whose criticisms are less valuable than his facts, calls it "un sacrilège et une profanation."

² 'Fabliaux ou Contes, Fables et Romans du xii^e et du xiii^e siècle, traduits ou extraits par Legrand D'Aussy.' (Ed. troisième. Paris, 1829. Vol. i. pp. 326-336). The piece is known only through Legrand D'Aussy, who confines the account of the birds' mass to the brief description repeated from him in the text.

knights and the canons, are stolen away from them by their humbler sisters the Grey Nuns of the Cistercian order, who ought to content themselves with monks of their own class. One of the Bernardines answers for her order that hearts know nothing of rank, and that the canonesses have only to be as pleasing and modest as their poorer sisters if they wish for love. The contest is represented as part of the poet's dream on a May night, and the dream opens with songs of a thousand birds, to whom the parroquet brings news that Venus is about to hold a court. Then the birds sing a grand mass, the nightingale officiating; with a sermon on love, that the parroquet delivers at the offertory before giving absolution to true lovers. Upon the mass follows a dinner of love, with dishes of glances, dishes of smiles, dishes of sighs and cares, jealousy for the strong drink that disturbs the brain, and a dish of kisses, from which all may take as many as they will, to bring the feasting to a joyous end. Jean de Condé appended to his fabliau a spiritual interpretation of it into allegory. That does not concern us. Parodies of church services were common among French rhymers in the thirteenth century,¹ and Chaucer's mass of the birds was not a new invention. Yet it was suggested by him in his own way, not with tedious or irreverent detail, but as a little burst of gladness that most fitly ends his love strain with the song of birds.

The 'Craft of Lovers' is a dialogue through which a lover wins his mistress. It was overheard, says the last stanza, early on a May morning in the year 1348. Chaucer, to whom it is doubtfully ascribed, was then twenty years old. It is written in the same seven-lined metre as 'The Court of Love,' the measure afterwards to be called rhyme royal, and it is one of the pieces collected by John Stow, which, with Lydgate's 'Siege of Thebes,' he annexed to Chaucer's works, in the edition of 1561.

The 'Remedy of Love,' still in the same measure, was declared by its Prologue to be the work of a young man who prays to the lord of flowering youth, and playfully exalts youth above age while professing the desire

¹ 'Histoire Littéraire de la France, Ouvrage commencé par des Religieux Bénédictins de la Congregation de Saint-Maur, et continué par des Membres de l'Institut.' Tome xxiii. (Paris, 1856), pp. 255, 6.

to give a young man's counsel to his brother. This poem is ascribed to the youth of Chaucer, and, although a contrary opinion has been strongly expressed, it has, I venture to think, a liveliness and ease of versification, with a healthy shrewdness of thought, that ally it to his writings. But it is a homily in holiday attire. Based upon Ovid's sequel to his 'Art of Love,' the 'Remedia Amoris,' in which the hand that wounded brings the medicine, it follows its own more serious way, and draws chiefly from the Proverbs of Solomon the illustrations of its counsel to avoid what Ovid called the "indignæ regna puellæ." The place given to marriage in Chaucer's 'Court of Love' accords with the counsel of the 'Remedies of Love,' to keep from her after whom the young man void of understanding goes "as an ox goeth to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks." But let him who is wise, if he must wed, marry a trusty wife, have faith in her, and love her without doting. Still it is very possible that 'The Craft of Lovers' and 'The Remedy of Love' were rightly included by Ritson¹ among the works of Lydgate.

To Chaucer's youth is ascribed also a 'Lamentation of Mary Magdalen' in 102 seven-lined stanzas, said to be Lamentation of Mary Magdalen. 'taken out of S. Origen, wherein Mary Madalen lamenteth the cruel death of her Saviour Christ.' This piece Chaucer, in 'The Legend of Good Women,' includes, as an early composition, in the citation of works written by himself—

"He made also, gon is a gretë while,
Originës upon the Maudelaine."²

Mr. Tyrwhitt has rightly observed that Chaucer seems to have meant a version of the Homily de Maria Magdalena, wrongly attributed to Origen, which these poor verses do not represent. Ritson ascribes these also to Lydgate.

In the two preceding lines Chaucer had said of himself—

"He hath in prosë translated Boece,
And made the life also of Sainte Cecile."

His 'Life of St. Cecilia' was included, as the Second Nun's

¹ 'Bibliographia Poetica,' p. 70.

² Legend of Good Women,' vv. 427, 8.

Tale, in the 'Canterbury Tales,' upon which the poet was at work in the very last years of his life. The translation of Boethius bears further witness to the earnest mind that was in his work even as a youth. Chaucer's translation of those books of Boethius upon the 'Consolations of Philosophy' which had been translated 450 years earlier by King Alfred,¹ reads like a student's exercise. It is very remarkable that the interspersed 'Metra' of the original did not tempt the young poet to exercise his skill in verse. He begins by giving the first lines of the first metre "*Carmina qui quondam*," &c., at the head of a prose translation of it into English. Then he gives the first lines of the first prose piece, "*Hæc dum mecum*," &c., at the head of a translation of that; and so he does with the second 'Metrum,' and the second 'Prosa,' and the others to the end, lengthening his English version by the occasional interpolation of a gloss. Thus, in translating the first metrum of the second book, when he has got as far as "manners of the boiling Euripe," he adds, "Glosa, Euripe is an arm of the see, that ebbethe and floweth, and some tyme the streame is on o side, and somtime on that other." Again, in reproducing the eleventh metrum of the third book, "*Quisquis profunda mente*," after literal translation of the first eight lines, he adds as 'Glosa' a more distinct expression of their meaning, and when he has gone forward again a little way, he interpolates a "that is to saine" in elucidation of another passage.

¹ See Bk. I., ch. xi.

CHAPTER V.

THE ROMAUNT OF THE ROSE, which belongs also to the earlier years of Chaucer's life, was his great work of translation as a poet, and that, perhaps, which especially obtained for him from Eustache Deschamps the ballade of poetical compliment that, in sending poems of his own by the hand of a friend, he addressed to him in stanzas ending each with the refrain, "Grant translateur, noble Geoffroi Chaucier."¹ The popularity of the 'Roman de la Rose' was great throughout Europe when Chaucer translated part of it. Of the poem as it has come down to us Guillaume de Lorris wrote, probably in the reign of Philip Augustus, between the years 1200 and 1230, the first 4070 lines; the rest, in 18,002 lines, is by Jean de Meung. The author of the continuation makes Love say that after that faithful servant Guillaume—may his tomb ever diffuse odour of incense!—should come Jean Clopinel (John Hobbler), born at Meung-sur-Loire, who all his life long should be true to Love and show, it was to be hoped, wisdom enough to keep always far from Reason, Love's enemy. He was to continue the 'Roman de la Rose' and work at it after forty years. The two trouvères, Guillaume and Jean, both lived in the valley of the Loire, Lorris and Meung being places not forty miles distant from each other. Meung is by the river side, now a town of less than four thousand inhabitants, with tanneries and paper-mills; Lorris, a town now of two thousand inhabitants, is

The Romaunt
of the Rose.

¹ As thus:

"Poète, hault louange destmye
En ton jardin ne servie qu'ortie :
Considère ce que j'ay dit premier,
Ton noble plant, ta douce mélodie.
Mais pour scavoir, de rescripre te prie
Grant translateur, noble Geoffroi Chaucier."

Deschamps, Œuvres ed. P. Tarbé, tome I., p. 124.

about ten miles from the river, higher up the stream ; and both are in the present department of the Loiret, which has been called the Garden of France. Guillaume de Lorris planned a poem not upon the Art of Love, although sometimes its doctrine is based upon Ovid's 'Art of Love,' with imitations and translations of some passages, happily adapted to the way of his own time. His argument is of Love's pains and pleasures, and so courtly that Poverty was not allowed to pass within the high enclosure of Love's garden. The reader now finds Guillaume's part of the 'Roman de la Rose' an ingenious allegory, distinguished by a musical and very graceful tediousness. Guillaume, with little playing upon words, almost no satire, and little show of erudition, was in good faith spinning the course of love into a parable of which, if he had finished it, he might have fulfilled his promise to supply his own detailed interpretation. In after years Clement Marot attached to it spiritual meanings—Wisdom, Grace, the Virgin, Glory of eternal Bliss : and it is not to be forgotten that the bent of monastic trifling which assigned to love verses of the cloister a second spiritual sense, had given a turn for double allegory to the taste of the Provençal troubadours who formed the style of Guillaume de Lorris.

'Roman de la Rose ;' the Part by Guillaume de Lorris.

He dreamt that, in springtime, he walked outside the town and came to a meadow, by a little river, where there were high walls painted with allegorical figures of Hatred, Avarice, Envy, Age, Sadness, Poverty, and other ills. He went round till he found the one small entrance-gate, which was opened to him by the beautiful portress Oyseuse—Idleness opening the entrance-gate to love. She told him courteously that the garden belonged to a bachelor named Déduit—Pastime—who often came thither to divert himself with his friends. Guillaume asked to see Pastime, and was admitted into the garden, where birds made sweet concert in the branches of the trees, and where he saw Pastime and his companions, beautiful as angels, dancing to the songs of his lady Dame Liesse, Lady Gladness, by whose side was Love. A lady, named Courtesy, invited Guillaume to take part in the amusement. Encouraged by his reception, Guillaume observed and described closely the chiefs of the company. Beside Love was a fair boy, named Doulx-Regard, Sweet-Look, who carried his two bows, one of knotted wood, ill-turned, the other of smooth wood, well painted. Doulx-Regard held five arrows, tipped with gold, All-Beauty, Simplicity, Frankness, Company, and Fair-Seeming, and five tipped with black and rusty iron, Pride, Evil-Speaking, Hate, Covetousness, and Despair. Guillaume also saw and described, as ladies of the

court of Pastime, Beauty, Wealth, Pretty Endearment, Bounty, Frankness, Courtesy, and Youth.

But while he was observing all this, Love saw him, asked Sweet-Look to bend one of his bows and give him five arrows, wherewith Love then hunted Guillaume, who observed, as he ran, the beauties of the park. He found a fountain which had served as mirror to the disdainful youth who was beloved of the nymph Echo. Whoever looked into that magic spring saw all that was in the garden. Guillaume, in looking into it, saw a rose-tree loaded with flowers that scented all the air of the garden, and he went towards the tree to pluck a rose, but as he went, Love, who saw him from under a fig-tree, pierced him with his five arrows.

Thenceforth the dreamer was the Lover. He went for solace to the rose-tree, breathed its soft perfume, was shot with a sixth balm-bearing arrow, that called Beau-Semblant, Fair-Seeming, and when this had pierced him, he knelt at the feet of Love and paid him homage. Love, accustomed to deceivers, asked for a pledge of his faith. The Lover offered his heart. This Love closed with a little gold key, and then, bidding him fear nothing, taught the Lover what laws he must obey. Observance of them would make him lean.

The true lover is distinguished by his leanness from false lovers and traitors, who are as plump as priors and abbés. He is sustained under trials by Doulx-Penser, Sweet-Thought, dreaming of his mistress; Doulx-Parler, Sweet-Words, talking of her to some friend; and Doulx-Regard, Sweet-Look, recollection of her charms. Love disappeared and left the lover in affliction. He would have comforted himself by going close to his Rose and smelling it, but feared lest he might seem like one who meant to steal it. Then Bel-Acueil, Fair-Reception, son of Courtesy, offered him free passage to the roses, if he would content himself with smelling them; whereat he was happy. But a great black bristling man, one of the porters of the garden, named Danger, now appeared, and with a threatening voice ordered away the Lover and Fair-Reception. He had with him Evil-Mouth, and Shame, and Fear. Shame was the daughter of Reason, and her father was Misdeed; but the daughter of Shame was Chastity, against whom Venus waged a constant war.

The sad Lover now reproached Love, and there came to his aid Reason, who, telling him that Idleness had let him into this, advised him to escape the yoke of Love and make an end of the foolish longing for a rose-bud. Failing to persuade him, Reason retired on a light wing to her heavenly abode.

The Lover sought a Friend to whom to tell his troubles, and was advised by his Friend to come to terms with Danger. Danger promised to forget what had happened on condition that the Lover should not pass the hedges which enclosed the rose-garden. Frankness and Pity were touched by the Lover's trouble at this hard condition, and joined in the Lover's prayer for better terms. Upon which Danger relented, and the Lover was allowed to go into the garden with Fair-Reception. But when he had thus entered, the Rose seemed more beautiful than before, and he prayed leave to kiss it. Fair-Reception opposed; but Venus, appearing, bade him cease his opposition. The sight of the torch of Venus inflamed the passion of the Lover, and he sought relief in kisses of the Rose. Evil-Mouth saw

him and told Jealousy, who, being always prompt to believe ill, picked a quarrel with the Lover. Shame argued in vain that Evil-Mouth was a liar by trade. Jealousy would dig a trench and build walls about the rose-garden, and would set up a tower in the midst, for the imprisonment of Fair-Reception. Fear came, and was troubled about this, and afterwards took private counsel with Shame to avert the harm that would come of the wrath of Jealousy. They resolved to look for Danger, whom they rebuked for his lax guard, and who promised to watch better in future. Jealousy, meanwhile, built his tower, in which he shut up Fair-Reception, setting Danger, Fear, Shame, and Evil-Mouth to watch the doors. The Lover, distressed at the fate of Fair-Reception, without whom he was helpless, began a lament.

It is in the midst of this lament that Guillaume de Lorris's part of the poem ends and Jean de Meung's begins, with an abrupt dash into the middle of the discourse.¹ Guillaume de Lorris is said by his last editor to have really finished his work in 79 more lines, that gave to his Lover possession of the Rose with Beauty's promise that while his heart was good and sound he should not be disturbed in his possession of it. But the additional lines, found in one or two manuscripts of the close of the fourteenth century, are rightly described by M. Paulin Paris² as additions made by an unknown person for the sake of giving to the work of Guillaume de Lorris a sort of completeness. It is absurd to suppose that after raising all his difficulties Guillaume would suddenly have put his Lover in possession of the Rose and brought the story to an end. Moreover if Guillaume had finished his poem, Jean would not have said that he left it unfinished, also distinctly pointing out the place where he left off.³ Guillaume de Lorris wrote his

¹ The last lines of Guillaume's part are, —

“Et si l'ai-ge perdu espoir,
A poi que ne m'en desespoir.”

and Jean continues :

“Desespoir, las ! ge non ferai,
Jà ne m'en desespererai.”

² ‘Hist. Littéraire de la France commencé par des Bénédictins de Saint-Maur.’ Tom. xxiii. Paris, 1856. The opening article of that volume is by M. Paulin Paris on the ‘Roman de la Rose,’ and I am indebted to it, as well as to M. Meon (‘Roman de la Rose.’ Tome 4. Paris, 1814) for information given in the text.

³ In the lines, —

“Cy endroit trespassa Guillaume
De Loris et n'en fist plus pseaulme ;

poem, as he himself says, at the age of five and twenty, probably between the years 1200 and 1230.¹ If, therefore, it was interrupted by his death, the trouvère died young. It was forty years after his death that Jean de Meung began the continuation, which was written probably about the year 1270, and could not have been written later than the year 1282. Jean de Meung says in his Testament, that it was a work of his youth; it was a most successful work, for it is certain that the continuation of the 'Roman de la Rose' gave its fame to the original poem. The success of Jean de Meung was strengthened by the violent abuse he provoked from those whom his satires on society offended. The lame trouvère, among whose other writings are a Testament, containing satire upon all ranks in the kingdom, and a Codicil containing long reflections on theology mixed with a little satire and a great display of mediæval learning, tells us also of himself in his Testament that "God gave him to serve the greatest people in France," and in his preface to Boethius,

Mais, après plus que quarante ans,
 Maître Jehan de Meung ce Rommans
 Parfist, ainsi comme je treuve;
 Et ici commence son œuvre."

¹ M. Meon, in his edition of the 'Roman de la Rose,' says that Guillaume probably died in 1260 or 1262, and this date has been generally followed. But M. Raynouard pointed out (in his review of Meon's edition in the 'Journal des Savans,' Oct. 1816) that Jean de Meung, in his continuation, said to have been written forty years after the death of Guillaume de Lorris, speaks of Charles of Anjou as the living King of Sicily,—

"Est ores de Secile roi."

He was crowned in 1266, expelled from Sicily in 1282, and died in 1285. Forty years before the time when Charles of Anjou reigned in Sicily would, therefore, be a date between 1226 and 1242. M. Paulin Paris ('Hist. Litt. de la France,' Tom. xxiii. pp. 24, 25, 43, 44) cites other passages; as mention of the imprisonment of Henry of Spain, of the exile of Guillaume de St. Amour in 1256, and of the second Robert of Artois, who "devint homme devant ses jours," a compliment paid apparently in the days of his youth, or between the years 1265 and 1270. Such references certainly carry back to the days of Philip Augustus the poem written at the age of twenty-five by one who died forty years before Jean de Meung began its continuation. M. Meon only observed that the continuation was written before 1305, because Jean de Meung simply includes the knights templars among regular religious bodies, and strong accusations were made against them in 1307, before the abolition of the order in 1309.

addressed to King Philip the Fair, he says that he had translated from Latin a book of Vegetius on the 'Military Art,' a book on the 'Marvels of Ireland,' Aelred on 'Spiritual Friendship,' the 'Letters of Eloisa and Abelard,' and translates now the 'Consolations' of Boethius. No more is known of the life of this French contemporary of Dante.

In the hands of Jean de Meung the characters of the original allegory of the 'Roman de la Rose' remain, but with changed natures. The timid grace of one young trouvère was followed by the bold wit of another, as young or younger, who was crammed with the scholarship of his time and poured it out in diffuse illustration of his argument, but who, a man of the people, alive with the stir of his time against polished hypocrisy, annoyed priests with his satire and court ladies with rude estimate of their prevailing character. Underlying all his part of the 'Romaunt of the Rose' is a religious earnestness that gave its verses currency, and made them doubly troublesome to those who dreaded free thought and full speech.

President Fauchet has preserved a story of Jean de Meung, which says that the poet was brought by some gentlemen into a company of ladies of the court, who had provided themselves each with a handful of twigs, and meant to whip him. His crime was the writing of those lines in which he made a jealous person attack women, and say of the fine ladies that all of them were, had been, or would be unchaste in fact or in desire. The story runs that he stayed all their hands by begging that as he had not attacked the wise and fair and good, the first stroke might be laid on by the stoutest woman of the class he had offended. Another tale about him is that he left at his death a handsome and heavy coffer to the Jacobins of Paris, on condition that they should not open it until after his burial. In expectation of a rich atonement for past satires on their order, the Jacobins gave the poet handsome burial within their church. But when they found in the coffer only slates covered with calculations in arithmetic and geometry, they would have dug him up again if the Parliament of Paris had not interfered.

Reason reappears at once in Jean de Meung's continuation of the Romance, and is a plain speaker. Indeed, the Lover is made to reproach her for not using disguises of speech, and gets

from her the true answer that she is ashamed only of sin, and accounts noble and worthy of its true and simple name every work of God. The whole argument is pure in thought and in design, yet it is the one that wilfully inflicts the roughest shocks on the conventional sense of propriety. Jean de Meung was a religious man, with active energetic interest in the condition of society, and his satire really demanded of both men and women that they should lead pure and honest lives. Like Chaucer in the 'Remedy of Love,' Jean de Meung was, as to such matters, of one mind with the Proverbs of Solomon. The mere outline of the story of the 'Roman de la Rose' as he continued it, is no index to the wealth of doctrine and illustration poured out, with no very close regard to the dramatic unity of the whole work, through every speaker in the allegory.

'Roman de la Rose ;' the Part by Jean de Meung.

The Lover, when lamenting the imprisonment of Fair-Reception, is again visited by Reason. This time it is Jean de Meung's Reason, who paints to him the slavery of love that looks only to pleasure, and praises the more spiritual aid of Friendship, that is superior to the inconstancies of Fortune. Reason blames vanity of youth and follows Tully in praise of old age, discusses friendship, also with use of thoughts from Cicero, censures Avarice and delight in this world's riches, upholds virtue and moderation as man's only stable wealth. The labourer who earns his bread from day to day is happier than a king.

Thus far Chaucer has translated the 'Roman de la Rose.' From the rest of the poem he adds only a translation of that part which, in the following outline, is included in brackets, [].

But, says the Lover, as to Friendship, it is a small matter; Tully himself found only two or three perfect examples of it in the ancient world, and do you think me wiser than Tully? Jean de Meung's Reason counsels then the diffused love that nature prompts, the simple desire to do to others as we would they should do to us. If mankind followed that precept there would be need neither of kings nor of judges. Reason proceeds to describe the character of the judge who sells his decision, a robber who better deserves hanging than the thief he condemns to the gallows. She tells, from Livy, the story of the unjust judge Appius and the daughter of Virginius; invites the Lover to attach himself to her, and be as the wise men of old who despised the caprices of Fortune. She personifies Fortune with an allegory, and tells of those caprices which lift up the insignificant to honour and cast down those whom we call the great into the first state of nothingness. The story of the crimes of Nero shows that the high gifts of Fortune do not make men better; they rather fall under the despotism of their own power. Let us not envy the exaltation of the wicked, seeing that the more terrible will be their fall. Nero

was reduced to self-murder. Croesus only escaped death at the hands of Cyrus as by a miracle. It was Hecuba's grief to survive the burning of Troy. Reason cites also from recent history the fall of Manfred, conquered by Charles of Anjou, and the fate of the young Conradin; this being a part of the poem from which its date may within a few years be determined. Rash Lover, says Reason, despise Fortune and the God of Love; attach yourself to me.

To all this the liegeman of Love replies that he cannot abate his passion for the Rose, and to turn the tables on his monitress, accuses her of an immodest word. Reason replies as we have seen, and leaves the Lover to his own devices.

He looks for the Friend who had before advised him, and who advises him now, that if he has had one kiss from his mistress he will have another; but he should affect a little indifference, and must win to his side the custodians of Fair-Reception—Evil-Mouth, Jealousy, Shame, and Danger. The Lover objects to soft dealing with those whom he would like to see hanged. There is another way, says the Friend, if you were rich enough, and that is Lavish-Giving. It is a road made of old time by Bounty. Every tower falls before those who travel by this road; but on that way I am too poor to be your guide.

Then, through the Friend, Jean de Meung discourses in his own way against prodigality, and against the women who look to the profit they can make of lovers. This leads him to a description of the poets' Age of Gold, which touches by inference on more than one of the ills of his own time. And now, to show the Lover something of the ills of love, the Friend takes on himself for a while the character of one phrensied with jealousy, and tells of the trouble with a poor wife for whom all must be earned by labour; with a rich wife who is proud and contemptuous; with a fair wife who attracts lovers; and with an ugly wife who does all that she can to make herself agreeable to others.¹ To this part of the poem, which extends over nine hundred lines, belong the verses that offended Christine de Pisan. He tells of Penelope and Lucretia; quotes Juvenal; refers to Abelard; attacks the extravagant cost of the vain ornaments of women; tells of Hercules and Dejanira, and of Samson and Dalilah; and then figures the jealous man, worked up by such diseased thoughts to ill-treatment of his wife, because he makes himself the master of her who was designed by nature for his equal and companion, and whose companion he should be, not her lord and master. This, be it observed, is the poet's worthy estimate of woman; the disdainful censure that formed part of the train of thought forming the torment of jealousy, being dramatic exaggeration of the censures to which levity laid woman open.

¹ "If thou be fair, ther folk ben in presence,
 Shew thou thy visage and thin apparaille:
 If thou be foule, be free of thy dispence,
 To get thee frendes ay do thy travaille:
 Be ay of chere as light as lefe on linde,
 And let him care, and wepe, and wringe, and waile."

Chaucer in the 'Clerke's Tale.'

This tyranny of man over woman was not suffered in the good old times, wealth was divided evenly, all people were at peace, till Deceit and Ambition broke the bonds of Peace, Poverty came from hell and brought to earth her son Larceny, with Discord and War in her train. Then began invasions, usurpations. The boniest men, strong to command and defend others, were made kings, and had domains assigned to them for their subsistence. These were not enough for them, and the people contributed to increase their revenues. So taxes and imposts first came in. But through the Friend in the poem, Jean de Meung launched his wrath against those who grew fat upon the substance of the poor. Finally, the Friend gave the Lover counsel touching behaviour as a lover and a mistress, which he took with him to the path that was guarded by Riches, who refused him entrance because he was not in her good graces.

Love, pitying the Lover, then descended to him, and asked him whether he had remembered and observed his commandments. The Lover repeated them immediately without a fault, and [was promised Love's continual protection. Then Love called all his lieges to join in attack on the castle in which Fair-Reception had been imprisoned. Aid was to be given to the Lover, who is named as Love's servant, Guillaume de Lorris; forty years after whose death shall come Jehan Clopinel, who will take up the tale of love, and serve Love all his days. Leisure, Bounty, Honour, Simplicity, Courtesy, and the rest of the Barons of the Court, came to the siege; [but there came also, to Love's annoyance, False-Seeming, son of Barratry, and the perfidious Hypocrisy. Constrained-Abstinence obtained by prayer leave for her brother False-Seeming to serve in the ranks of Love. Love bade False-Seeming teach the Lover by what marks he might be known, and the reply of False-Seeming is Jean de Meung's religious attack upon hypocrisy, both in the world and in the cloister. Especially he attacks the men of feigned devotion, who falsely affect fasting and poverty, and who combine for the ruin of those who attack their vices. When these lines were written, there was hot war between the mendicant orders and the University of Paris. Jean de Meung sided with the University champion, Guillaume de Saint Amour. False-Seeming asks alms, but lives upon tit-bits; he has bulls which qualify him to absolve from sins before he has heard one word of confession. He is most surely to be found in a religious coat with mortified exterior, haunting the palaces of princes. False-Seeming was sworn to the service of Love, and then joined his sister Constrained-Abstinence in search of Evil-Mouth, the first who must be overcome. To him False-Seeming preached, with a devout air, so touching a sermon against the wickedness of slander, that Evil-Mouth came to confession,] when Constrained-Abstinence throttled her till she lolled out her tongue, which False-Seeming then cut off with a razor that he carried hidden under his Dominican robe. Then they entered the court of the fortress and killed the Norman soldiers who slept drunk with wine. Bounty, Courtesy, False-Seeming, and Constrained-Abstinence, next persuaded the duenna who had care of Fair-Reception to let the Lover see her prisoner, who, in dread of Jealousy, was hardly persuaded by the duenna to accept a chaplet of flowers. The duenna proceeded to remark Fair-Reception's beauty, that she might have occasion to dis-

course at large upon her own, now lost. She instructed Fair-Reception, very much out of Ovid, in the tricks of love, and especially in the duty of young women to get all they can from men, and give them nothing. In irony commending faithlessness, she cites pious Æneas, Demophon, Pâris, and Jason. Women cannot help loving, she says. The duenna had herself given all to a young man who cared only to plunder her of the gifts she received from other lovers. Fair-Reception promised to be the better for these lessons, and asked that the Lover might be brought now to his prison, on condition that he keep his affection within bounds of respect. When he came they embraced, and he received gladly from Fair-Reception the offer of his services. Then the Lover was about to kiss the Rose, when Danger saw him and set up a cry. Shame and Fear set upon Fair-Reception, and, after beating him cruelly, shut him in a dungeon. He might have been killed if the barons of Love's army had not come to his help. Here Jean de Meung apologizes to true ladies and the truly pious, for his free speaking against those who are falsely confounded with them, and argues that in his attack on hypocrites he takes no new ground, but only follows in the track of poets and philosophers. And now, at last, he comes to the fight between the soldiers of Love and the defenders of the castle of Jealousy. The besieged were too strong for him, and Love begged a twelve-day truce, that he might have time to send for help to his Mother. His ambassadors arrived at Cythera, where Venus held her court, and found her at rest in the wood with Adonis, where she gave him the good counsel on the chase, which he would die afterwards for disregarding. Here dexterous use is made of Ovid's tale of 'Venus and Adonis.' On hearing of her son's distress, Venus had six pigeons harnessed to her car, and went to the help of the army that—Love being a bad keeper of compacts—had broken truce and again waged a despairing battle. Venus, seeing the straits of Love, vowed that there should be no more chastity in women; and Love, on his part, vowed that there should be no more chastity in men.

Nature meanwhile was at her forge, repairing day by day the losses of the battle. Art sat at her feet watching her, and seeking to imitate her processes. Nature, in deep grief, abated of her industry, and sent for the priest Genius, that she might confess to him how much she had desired to leave the human race to perish. Genius, when he arrived, told her that her tears were feminine, and preached against the quick temper of women and their small discretion. Then Nature knelt and began her confession with the creation of the world and the harmony of the spheres; came then to the way in which the race of man shortens its days, and vainly casts responsibility upon the figures of the stars; was led by this into an argument upon Predestination, from which Nature passed to the thunder and the rainbow, light, and optic glasses, and false superstition attached to the natural appearances of comets in the sky. Why should a comet come because a king is dead, when the dead body of a king differs in nothing from that of a carter? Virtue is the sole nobility, and highest virtue is sometimes in men of obscure birth. Now-a-days not poetry and philosophy, but success in the chase, graces a man; the sole virtue is nobility of name. It is here that the young Count Robert of Artois is cited as a living type of a true gentleman. Of what use the

name, if we have not the qualities of those who first made it a name of honour. This confession of Nature is, in fact, a poem upon God and Man in their relation to the world. Nature tells Genius that she complains not of the elements, or of the rest of creation, that brings forth its right fruit in due season; but only of man. This man, the microcosm, for love of whom a God became incarnate and died on the cross, is delivered up to all the vices for which Nature now asks vengeance, and especially to sins against her laws established for the propagation of his kind. Nature, having received absolution and order to work at her forge, sends Genius then to Love and Venus at the camp. There all were glad of the High Priest's arrival, except False-Semblance and Constrained-Abstinence, who slipped away without farewells. Love attired Genius in the chasuble, ring, cross, and mitre, of a bishop. Genius then declared the commands of Nature, and pronounced his sentence of excommunication against those who sinned against Nature's own laws of love. Genius discoursed of the acts of Jupiter, and of the garden of our innocent first parents, comparing that Eden to the Rose Garden of the allegory, a garden constructed by weak mortal hands; comparing also the Rose Garden's fountain of Narcissus, a fountain of self-worship, with the springs of the divine essence and the fountain of eternal life. Of that fountain Genius bids them qualify themselves hereafter to drink.

Then the soldiers of Love, animated by the address of their Priest, prepared to renew the attack. Venus summoned Shame to surrender, threatening pillage of all the roses in the garden.

Before leaving, Genius threw into the air the torch that had been placed in his hands by Love. The flame reached to the prison of Fair-Reception, and disposed his harsh jailers to tenderness. While Venus drove away Shame and Fear, and directed an arrow against the Rose that was the prize of victory, the Lover saw in the attractive Rose a parallel to the beloved statue of Pygmalion. This gives occasion to the poet for an amplified paraphrase from Ovid of the story of Pygmalion, who is made to present the Lover to his image, when the arrow shot by Venus gives, as it were, life to the statue. The brand of Venus thrown into the castle put to flight all its defenders. Courtesy, Pity, and Franchise, were first to enter and go through the fire to Fair-Reception, whom Courtesy was first to address and beseech in the name of all to concede to the Lover his desires, citing Virgil for authority that "*Amor vincit omnia*." So let him pluck the Rose. Fair-Reception replied that he might, and the Lover was at hand immediately with his thanks and his reply. That reply of his, with the description of the plucking of the Rose, paints in diffuse allegory the consummation of a fleshly love. So ends the poem—

"Ainsi oi la Rose vermeille
Atant fu jor, et je m'esveille."

No commentator on the 'Roman de la Rose' has observed that the character of Genius, who comes to confess Nature and is sent by her to the army of Love, for whose service he is robed and mitred—the same who reappears as the Confessor of the

Lover in Gower's English poem—was taken by Jean de Meung from one of the books of Alain de l'Isle. Alain de l'Isle was the Universal Doctor, who died early in the thirteenth century, and of whom it used to be a proverb that only to look at him was learning.¹ One of his books, in prose mingled with verse, was called the Complaint of Nature—'Liber de Planctu Naturæ.'² Here Nature is represented as ceasing from her work because of the degeneracy of the relations between men and women; is described with elaborate allegory; addresses Alain; is invoked by him in Sapphic metre to tell why she comes and why she weeps, and having answered these questions, in reply to others she sets forth the vices of mankind. After this, Hymen arrives with Chastity, Temperance, Bounty, and Humility, and the complaint of Nature being continued, Hymen is sent by Nature with a letter to Genius, which Alain gives at length, bidding Genius come and, in her presence, excommunicate the sons of abomination from the sacraments of her church. Upon the coming of Genius, attended by Truth as by a daughter, Nature goes out to receive him with the kiss of mystical love. Genius approves of the severe edict of Nature against those who abuse her laws. Then Genius puts off his lay clothes, and, robed in sacerdotal vestments, cuts off from the kiss of supreme Love and the grace of Nature all those of whose misdoing Nature had complained, and deprives of the seal of Venus all who make unnatural exception to the rule of Venus. When Genius had ceased, the virgins in attendance upon Nature said Amen, and turned their candles to the earth so that the light went out and the vision of the dreamer ended.

Jean de Meung had not written three hundred lines of his continuation before he alluded to this work of Alain's, in making Reason say incidentally to the Lover that "they are only those of evil love whom Genius excommunicated because they do wrong to Nature;³ and, as we have seen, the complaint of Nature is, in accordance with the earnest didactic spirit of the

¹ The proverb was "Sufficiat vobis vidisse Alanum."

² It is, with Alain's other works, in 'Migne's Patrologia,' vol. 210. Paris, 1855.

³ "Se ne sunt cil de male vie
Que Genius escommenie,
Por ce qu'il font tort à Nature".—Ll. 4356-8.

poet, connected closely with the final summing up of the Romance of Love. Genius consoles Nature, and at the crisis of the story Genius delivers to the hosts of Love a poetical paraphrase of the excommunication invented by Alain de l'Isle. Alain's excommunication was meant as a pure-hearted popular protest against common vices, and with design as pure it was popularised by Jean de Meung yet more completely in the playful earnestness of a paraphrase by which it was incorporated in the literature of the people.

Of the 4070 lines of the poem which were the work of Guillaume de Lorris, Chaucer gives in 4432 lines of his 'Romaunt of the Rose' a complete translation into English verse of the same metre, happily fitting English to the French, or now and then expanding the original thought in a version that is close without servility, and in its free movement shows the ease of an expert master of song. Of the 18,002 lines of the poem which were the work of Jean de Meung, Chaucer's remaining 3268 lines of the 'Romaunt of the Rose' translate fully, and even with slight amplifications,¹ the first 2000, or as

¹ For example, in Reason's argument upon the greed of physicians and lawyers ('Roman de la Rose,' vv. 5106-5116), Chaucer, who has already enlarged the ten lines of the original to sixteen, adds to them a character wholly the reverse of that of physicians of the present time:—

“ They woll not werchen in no wise
But for lucre and covetise,
For physiche ginneth first by ‘phi,’
The phisithion also soothly,
And sithen it goeth from fie to fie,
To trust on hem it is follie,
For they will in no manner gree,
Doe right nought for charitee.”

But even these verses are imitated from Guiot de Provins, as M. Sandras observes, who is, however, utterly wrong in saying that Chaucer condensed and selected to bring Jean de Meung's part of the Romance into proportion with that of De Lorris. I add from the next passage in Reason's exhortation against avarice, a fair specimen of Chaucer's manner of translating, showing both how he amplifies and how he translates line for line:—

“ Mès or laissons lex preschéors,
Et parlons des entasséors.

“ But let us leaven these prechours,
And speake of hem which in hir tours
Heape up hir gould, and fast eshet,
And sore thereon their hirte is set.

far as verse 5169 of the whole poem, namely, to the end of the lines

“ Nus n'aime fors por son preu faire,
 Por dons ou por servise traire ;
 Néis fames se vuelent vendre
 Mal chief puist tele vente prendre.”

Which Chaucer translates,—

“ We see that no man loveth now,
 But for winning and for prow,
 And love is thrall'd in servage
 Whan it is sold for advantage ;
 Yet women woll hir bodies sell ;
 Such soules goth to the Divell of hell.”

Here Chaucer's sustained work as translator ended, and of the large part of the original poem yet remaining he has left only the translation of one interesting fragment. His 'Romaunt of the Rose' gives nothing of the rest of the dialogue between Reason and the Lover, with the story of Virginius, the argument concerning Fortune, the stories of Nero and Seneca, Cræsus, &c. —nothing of the continuation of the narrative with the departure of the Lover in search of the Friend, of the dialogue with the Friend, his stories and his setting forth of jealousy, including the passage that especially offended Christine de Pisan, who opened an argument upon the poem in the year 1399 by her 'Letter to the God of Love,' while in the name of the Church Gerson protested against what was, in fact, the attack of a

Certes Diex n'aiment, ne redoutent
 Qant lex deniers en trésor boutent,
 Et plus qu'il n'est mestier les gar-
 dent :

Quant les povres dehors regardent
 De froit trembler, de faim perir,
 Diex le lor saura bien merir.
 Trois grans meschéances aviennent
 A ceus qui tiex vies maintiennent :
 Par grant travail quierent richeces ;
 Paor les tient en grant destreces,
 Tandis cum du garder ne cessent ;
 En la fin à dolor les lessent.
 En tel torment muerent et vivent
 Cil qui les grans richeces sivent.”

They neither lovè God ne drede,
 They keepè more than it is nede,
 And in hir bagges sore it bind
 Out of the sunne and of the wind :
 They put up morè than need ware
 Whan they seen poorè folk forfare,
 For hunger die and for cold quake ;
 God can wel vengeance therof take.
 Three great mischiefes hem assaileth,
 That thus in gadering aye travailleth :
 With much pain they win richesse ;
 And drede hem holdeth in distresse
 To keepe that they gather fast ;
 With sorrow they leave it at the last.
 With sorrow they both die and live,
 That unto richesse her hertes yeve.”

reformer. Chaucer's version leaves untranslated the discourse upon the Golden Age, and the relation of kings to their people. Also the Lover's going to Riches, the coming of Love to him, his repetition of his lesson, Love's summoning of his barony, their assembling and his speech to them containing Jean de Meung's graceful reference to Guillaume de Lorris, are passed by a jump over 5545 lines of the original to the reply of the barons to the speech of Love:

"When Love had told him his entent," &c.

Chaucer, in fact, when he flagged over the continuous labour, seems to have given it up; but of the rest of the work he had already gratified his inclination to translate one favourite passage, which was ready for insertion in its proper place. To the continuous translation therefore of the original poem, as far as verse 5169, this one fragment is added, containing False Seeming's exposition of hypocrisy, his going as a false friar with Constrained Abstinence to "Wicked Tongue" (Malebouche), and their dialogue, till at the point where Malebouche is about to kneel in confession to the feigned priest, and when the evil tongue is about to be cut out, Chaucer's translation ends. This is at line 12,563 of the original,—

"Vous aurez m'asolucion."

The remaining 9510 lines of the 'Roman de la Rose' are left, therefore, untranslated.

Recollections of the 'Roman de la Rose' are frequent in Chaucer's later writing, and there can be no doubt that his translation from it was made in the years before he followed Edward III.'s army to France. He refers to it in the 'Legend of Good Women' as one of his claims to credit with true lovers:

"For that I of Creseyde wroot or told,
Or of the Rose, what so myn auctour mente,
Algate, God woot, yt was myn entente
To forthren Trouthe in love, and yt cheryce,
And to ben war fro falsnesse and fro vice."

'The Assembly of Foules' and 'The Complaint of the Black Knight, were written when the army wherein Chaucer bore arms was near its departure. For 'The Assembly of Foules' celebrates young John of Gaunt's suit to Henry of

The Assembly
of Foules.

Lancaster's daughter Blanche, and its argument implies that it was written in the year before their marriage; while 'The Complaint of the Black Knight,' celebrates a misunderstanding of unmarried lovers. But the marriage took place when bride and bridegroom were of the same age of nineteen—the age of their poet being thirty-one—in 1359, the year of the going into France of the great army of invasion that had Chaucer in its ranks.

'The Assembly of Foules' is told as a student's dream, opening and closing with the poet himself as a reader of books, who says in the last lines,—

“ I wooke, and other bookës toke me to
To rede upon ; and yet I rede alway.
I hope ywys to redë so somme day,
That I shall metë sommethyng for to fare
The bet, and thus to rede I wol not spare.”

Chaucer represents himself as reading with delight that beautiful fragment of the sixth book of Cicero on the Republic, which contains the doctrine of the soul's immortality in 'The Dream of Scipio.' The Neoplatonic commentary of Macrobius, a grammarian of the fifth century, who had connected it with discourses on the constitution of the Universe, had given to this fragment—the 'Somnium Scipionis'—a wide influence in the middle ages that was felt even by Dante. It is referred to even in the opening lines of the 'Roman de la Rose' as an authority for the significance of dreams. Representing himself in the opening of 'The Assembly of Foules' as a student occupied with this piece of philosophy, Chaucer sketches its argument and nobly translates its highest teaching in the lines—

“ Knowe thyself first immortall,
And loke aie besely thou werke and wisse
To comune profite, and thou shalt not misse
To come swiftly unto that placë dere
That full of blisse is and of soulës clere.”¹

¹ Quæ si est una ex omnibus, quæ sese moveat: neque nata est certè, et æterna est. Hanc tu exerce in optimis rebus: sunt autem optimæ, curæ de salute patriæ: quibus agitatus et exercitatus animus, velocius in hanc sedem et domum suam pervolabit.—*De Republ.* Lib. vi. *ad fin.* The Commentary of Macrobius is in two books, added to a reprint of the Dream from Cicero. In the twenty-two chapters of the first book he compares Cicero and Plato, justifies the use of fable, describes five sorts of dreaming, classifies this dream

Then the day failed and the reader slept and dreamt that Scipio Africanus stood before him, willing to reward him for the study of his old book—

“all to-torne,
Of which Macrobië raught not a lite.”

But as each man's dreams are coloured by the circumstances of his life, Scipio took Chaucer—

“And forth with him unto a gate me brought
Right of a parke, y-wallëd with grene stoone.”

(These are the lines in which foundation is sought for the notion that the poet had a house near the park at Woodstock.¹) The gate was in two halves, each opening to a different path, and the inscriptions over them are founded upon Dante's vision of the writing set over the gate of Hell, 'Per me si va nella città dolente,' &c. Over one half of Chaucer's gate were lines that begin—

“Thorgh me men goon into that blysfyl place
Of hertës hele and dedely woundës cure ;”

But—

“Thorgh me men goon (thanne spake that other side)
Unto the mortall strokës of the spere,
Of which disdayne and daunger is the gyde ;
There tree shall never frute ne levës beare
This streame yow ledeth unto the sorwful were,
There as the fyssh in prysoun is al drye,
Theschewing is onely the remedye.”

Chaucer's way was about to be, through that second half of the gate, to mortal strokes of spear; for the expedition against France was impending and, as it proved, that way also was to lead him to the prison in which he would be as a fish caught in the weir. He stood in doubt before the gates, but was told by Scipio that, if he himself had lost the taste of love, he might see that which he could not do. So the poet in his dream went

and shows its scope, argues of the numbers seven, eight and four, and then proceeds to the philosophy of heaven and earth. In the second book, of seventeen chapters, he proceeds to the soul of the world and other mysteries. Macrobius wrote also a larger but less popular work, in seven books, on the ancient Saturnalia.

¹ See page 151.

into the garden of Love which, after a stanza full of its trees, he proceeds to describe with the allegorical persons in it, including Cupid at the fountain tempering his arrows, and the crouched Venus herself, in sixteen stanzas, which are directly translated from sixteen stanzas (51-66) of the seventh book of the 'Teseide' of Boccaccio. The last of the sixteen is transposed, and becomes in Chaucer's version the fourteenth, yet he translates as closely as he did in the 'Romaunt of the Rose,' sometimes expanding or contracting a thought, or omitting a detail, yet on the whole so faithfully that this passage in the 'Assembly of Foules' is quite answer enough to those who say there is no evidence of Chaucer's having read Italian.¹

Chaucer's interest in the Teseide of Boccaccio is very manifest. We have found him echoing some of its stanzas in the Court of Love, now he translates at length one its dainty passages,

¹ In the following stanzas, for example, Chaucer varies expression of a detail at the close of the original stanza, which describes Cupid at arrow-making by the fountain, but in other respects translates Boccaccio as literally as possible.

"Tra li albuscelli ad una fonte allato
 Vide Cupido a fabbricar saette
 Avendo egli à suoi piè l' arco posato,
 Le qua' sua figlia Volluttade elette
 Nell' onde temperava, ed assettato
 Con lor s' era Ozio, il quale ella vedette
 Che con Memoria l' aste sue ferrava
 De' ferri ch' ella prima temperava.

"E poi vide in quel passo Leggiadria
 Con Adornezza ed Affabilitate
 E la ismarrita in tutto Cortesia,
 E vide l'Arti ch' hanno potestate
 Di fare altrui a forza far follia,
 Nel loro aspetto molto isfigurate:
 Della immagine nostra il van Diletto
 Con Gentilezza vide star soletto."

Teseide, VII. st. 54, 55.

"Under a tree, besyde a welle, I say
 Cupide our lorde his arrowes forge
 and fyle,
 And at hys fete hys bowe alredy lay:
 And welle hys doghtre tempred
 al the while
 The heddes in the welle; and
 with harde file
 She couched hem after, as they
 shuldë serve
 Somme to slee, and somme to
 wounde and kerve.

"Thoo was I war of Pleasaunce anon
 ryght,
 And of Array and Lust, and
 Curtesye,
 And of the Crafte, that kan and
 hath the myght
 To doo be force, a wyght to do
 folye:
 Dysfigurëd was she, I shal not lie;
 And by hymself, under an oke I gesse,
 Sawgh I Delyte, that stooode with
 Gentilesse."

and we shall presently find him beginning the round of his Canterbury Tales with the story of this poem of Boccaccio's, as his Knight's Tale of Palamon and Arcite, to be dramatized by Beaumont and Fletcher, and rewritten by Dryden after many years.

The 'Teseide' was Boccaccio's first long poem, and the poem also wherein he first produced that *ottava rima*, which was afterwards the measure of almost every great Italian poem, as well as of the great epics of Portugal and Spain. Of this measure, though two or three examples of its use are to be found in earlier writers, Boccaccio is held to have been the inventor, as certainly it was he who established for it a place in European literature. In the old Sicilian *ottava rima* one pair of rhymes had alternated throughout a stanza; but of this measure the other Italians made almost no use. By turning the seventh and eighth lines into a couplet closed with a third rhyme (thus, putting letters for rhymes—a, b, a, b, a, b, c, c), Boccaccio gave to the whole measure a sense of perfectness, while adding to its music. There had been chance usings of such a measure, as, about 1235, by King Thiebault of Navarre, but its true birthplace was the *Teseide*.¹

This work of Boccaccio's youth was distinguished by more than the new charm of its metre. It broke fresh ground by abandoning the conventional machinery of a dream and working out a story of man's life in twelve books of sustained interest, and in that sense it is sometimes ranked as the first modern epic. Theseus, after whom it is named, is not its hero, but is the hero only of its episode; the main subject being the love of two young Thebans, Palamon and Arcite, for the Amazon Emilia. The poem is said to have been written for Mary, the natural daughter of King Robert of Naples, usually identified with Boccaccio's Fiammetta, who is otherwise interpreted as a personification of imperial power—civil power—contending with the Ghibellines against the temporal encroachment of the Pope.

Chaucer's poem of the 'Assembly of Foules' which, without loss of unity, had thus passed from a sketch of the 'Dream of Scipio' read in Macrobius to a translation from Boccaccio's 'Teseide,' refers next to Alain de l'Isle's Complaint of Nature,

¹ Crescimbeni, Lib. III., cap. 3.

² See pp. 191, 2.

but as a book so well known that beyond a few touches from Alain and his copyist in the 'Roman de la Rose'¹ it is enough to say of personified Nature—

“—ryght as Alayne, in the Pleynt of Kynde,
 Devyseth Natùre, of suche array and face,
 In suche array men myght her therè fynde.”

It was Valentine's Day, and Nature according to her wont, was calling all the birds to stand each in his place before her—

“Benyngly for to chese, or for to take
 By hir accorde, hys formell or hys make.”

For the muster roll of the birds, with characters attached to their names, there is precedent in a passage of Alain's 'Plaint of Nature,' which may also have suggested both the groundwork of the poem and its title. Alain describes Nature's changing robe as being in one of its forms so ethereal that it is like air, and the pictures on it seem to the eye "A Council of Animals."² Upon which, beginning, as Chaucer does, with the Eagle and the Falcon, Alain proceeds with a long list of the birds painted on her transparent robe that surround Nature as in a council, and attaches to each bird the most remarkable point in its character.

But now Chaucer gives point by a touch of his own to all this graceful interweaving of a scholar's memories. Setting Nature in the Assembly of the Birds who on Valentine's Day choose their mates, he places as a formell (female) eagle in her hand the high-born Lady Blanche for whose love the king's son John of Gaunt was a suitor. Nature, the poet says,—

¹ M. Sandras says that Chaucer owes to the 'Roman de la Rose,' his line,—

“Nature, the Vicar of Almighty God.”

But how different the tone of that line from—

“Il si grant sire tant me prise
 Qu'il m'a por chamberiere prise.
 Por chamberiere ! certes vaire,
 Por connestable, et por Vicaire.”

² “Vivore, quasi smaragdo, oculis applaudabat. Hæc autem nimis subtilisata, subter-fugiens oculorum indaginem, ad tantam materiæ tenuitatem devenerat, ut ejus aerisque eandem crederes esse naturam, in qua, prout oculis pictura imaginabatur, Animalium celebrabatur Concilium. Illic aquila,” &c.—*Alan. De Planctu Naturæ*. Opera, ed. Migne, p. 435.

“helde on hir honde,
 A formel egle, of shappe the gentileste,
 That ever she amonge hir workës fonde,
 The moste benigne and eke the goodlyeste,
 In hir was every vertu at his rest,
 So ferforthe, that Natùre hir selfe had blysse
 To looke on hir, and ofte hir beke to kysse.”

Upon that day of choosing mates with which to fly away, the worthiest, said Nature, should begin. And that was (John of Gaunt) the tercel¹ eagle, not less perfect than the formell upon Nature's hand which he of course chose “with will and heart and thought.” He was described by Nature as—

“The tercell egle, as ye know full wele,
 The foule royall, above you all in degre,
 The wise and worthie, the secret true as stele,
 The which I have formed, as ye may see,
 In every parte as it best liketh me.”

When this fowl royal had declared his love—

“Another tercell egle spake anon
 Of lower kind ;”

and yet again a third declared in other terms his love for the fair formell upon Nature's hand.

Then all the birds were to deliver their opinions, and through them we have genial touches of the poet's humour. They began with a confused noise of quarrel. Then, being required by Nature to elect for each kind a spokesman and speak in the order of their rank, the birds of prey chose the falcon to say for them that, to know who loved best the gentle formell, it seemed there must be battle. All the three tercels declared themselves ready for that; but the falcon went on to argue that the worthiest knight, most of estate and of gentlest blood, was fittest for such mate—

“And of these three, she woote hir-selfe I trowe,
 Which that he be, for hyt is lyght to knowe.”

The water-fowls spoke next, through the goose, who advised any suitor as though he were the goose's brother, “But she wol love hym, lat hym love another.” The goose was laughed at by the

¹ Tercel, male, is strictly the male of the goshawk, which is a third smaller than the falcon.

gentle fowl, and the turtle in behalf of the said fowl delivered opposite judgment, which the duck was reproved by the tercelet for jesting at. The cuckoo, for the worm-fowl, said that if he had but his own mate in peace, he cared not how long they might strive. When this fellow had been put down for his selfishness by the merlin, Nature bade them cease, and let the formell eagle make choice for herself; but in asking her to choose counselled her—

“ the royal tercel take
As seyde the tercelet, ful skilfully,
As for the gentilest, and moste worthy,
Whiche I have wroght so wel to my plesaunce,
That to yow hyt ought to ben a suffisaunce.”

The lady answered timidly that she must reserve her choice until the end of the year. Upon which Nature advised the three tercelets to serve patiently; “A yere ys not so longë to endure;” and proceeded to pair the rest of the fowls. These being mated, flew away, after they had chosen, according to yearly usage, birds to sing a roundel at their departing; the roundel was—

“To do Nature honour and pleasaunce,
The note, I trowe, maked was in Fraunce”—

to the refrain—appropriate for those who had a year to wait, of

“ Qui bien ayme a tarde oublie.”

Both Machault and Deschamps set words to the refrain of this older line, which M. Sandras found in MS. opening a hymn to the Virgin by Moniot de Paris; but not in any known ballad of Machault or Deschamps has been found the bird's praise of St. Valentine, with which Chaucer makes the ‘Assembly of Fowles’ seen in his dream take flight, and with clamour of their departure wake him to his books again.

The ‘Complaint of the Black Knight’ is another poem written for John of Gaunt during his courtship of the Duchess Blanche. Probably written immediately after the ‘Assembly of Foules,’ it is in the same metre, and repeats, with variations, the idea of Chaucer's entering by a small gate into a park walled with green stone, where birds sing, and where there is shelter of trees, which are severally cited and characterized. Here, too, he is again careful to separate himself from the

The Complaint
of the Black
Knight.

lovers, as one who himself has "no knowing of such matere." The poem in this case is not a Dream, but, in other respects, its opening is thoroughly according to the old conventions of court poetry.

Complaint of the Black Knight.

The singer, awakened from slumber, walks, on a May morning, by a river side, until he comes to the small park gate. He passes through the gate, finds in the park gladness of birds, flowers, and trees, refreshes himself at a fountain, and at last finds in a bower, between a holly and a woodbine, a man in black lying pale and wan upon the flowers, in such piteous grief that it is death to hear him groan.

"He was in sothe without exception
To speke of manhood, one the best on live."

The poet hidden among the bushes records the Complaint of the Black Knight, whom false tongues have hindered of his lady's grace. Malebouche, the old enemy of love from the Romaunt of the Rose, began the slander of truth, and judgment has been given against the knight in his absence. He complains, therefore, of the sufferings of true lovers—Pyramus, Tristram, Achilles, Antony, Arcite, and the prospering of such false lovers as Jason, Theseus, Æneas, and many more. But if his lady, who has from Nature all good gifts and graces, with disdain added thereto, will murder him with sharp and keen words for his truth, it is the knight's duty to obey her doom in all things, and "at her lust wilfully to dey." Only he prays humbly that ere he dies she may know his truth, and so he would recommend himself to her mercy and take at her hands life or death.

When the Black Knight ended his Complaint with a sore sigh, the poet's eyes ran tears. As night was drawing on, the lover rose and retired into a lodge there beside, where all the May his custom was to abide; and then, as the sunset colours faded, Hesperus, the star of Venus, appeared in the sky, and the poet kneeling, prayed to the glad star and lady Venus that his lady might take to her grace the true man that lay in the arbour. So presently the poem ends, with a direct address to her for whom it was written on her knight's behalf. "Princesse, pleaseth it to your benignitie," &c.

This poem resembles Froissart's 'Dit du Bleu Chevalier,' but the blue knight may have been a successor of the black. The poem is a court poem, thoroughly conventional, expressing unreal agonies by the accepted formulas. The natural genius of Chaucer only appears in the delicate suggestion of the fading sunset at the close of the day's plaint, and the rise in the western sky of the evening star, "so glad, so faire, so persaunt eke of chere," that invites the poet's prayer to Venus for his patron's prospering in love.

‘Chaucer’s A. B. C.,’ or Prayer of Our Lady, is a devotional poem, translated out of Guillaume de Guileville’s Chaucer’s A. B. C. ‘Pelerinage de l’Homme,’ and contains a prayer for intercession of the Virgin, in twenty-three stanzas of that variation upon octave rhyme, which Spenser afterwards adopted in the ‘Faerie Queene’ with the addition of a final Alexandrine. The first lines of the successive stanzas begin with successive letters of the French alphabet (having no W). Guillaume de Guileville, a Cistercian monk in the royal abbey of Chalis, in the opening of his allegorical dream, after the manner of the ‘Roman de la Rose,’ himself dates it in 1330. Lydgate translated the whole work; and when he came to this A. B. C. of prayer to the Virgin, said of it, that—

“My mayster Chaucer in hys tyme
After the ffrenche he dyde yt ryme;”

and, therefore, to illumine his own little book with some clause of his writing, he would “ympen this oryson after his translation.”¹ No doubt, therefore, this A. B. C. is rightly reported to be work done for the pleasure of the Duchess Blanche. The soul of it is mediæval dread of the God who is Love, a dread which was the soul of mediæval worship of the Virgin:

“God of his goodnesse
Forgiveth none, but it like unto thee.”

‘Chaucer’s Dream’ is now the title of an independent poem, first printed by Thomas Speght in the 1597 edition of the works of Chaucer. He prefixed to it a note, saying, “That which heretofore hath gone under the name of his dreame, is the Book of the Duchesse: on the death of Blanche, Duchesse of Lancaster.” Thomas Speght saw in the original strain of poets’ fancies now bearing the name of ‘Chaucer’s Dream,’ a celebration of the marriage between John of Gaunt and Blanche of Lancaster, blended with Chaucer’s own courtship of Sir Payne Rouet’s daughter Philippa. Acceptance of his notion would require belief that, in a poem meant to

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Chaucer’s Dream.
¹ For details on this subject, see pp. 5–10 of “The Ancient Poem of Guillaume de Guileville, entitled Le Pelerinage de l’Homme compared with the Pilgrim’s Progress of John Bunyan, edited” [by Katherine Isabella Cust] “from Notes collected by the late Mr. Nathaniel Hill.” London, 1858.

celebrate the marriage of his patron, Chaucer gave to the object of his own personal love the place of honour. For there are two heroines in 'Chaucer's Dream,' and the one who alone could represent the Duchess Blanche appears in artistic subordination to the other. Chaucer's other poems, celebrating the first love of his friend and patron, show that he was far removed from any possibility of so offending against a chief principle of the old court poetry. The usage among poets which had caused Dante and Petrarch to keep out of their verse the women whom they really chose for sharers of their homes, was customary till long after Chaucer's time. Here and there may, perhaps, be found a poem in which the conventional variations on the one appointed theme of courtly verse-making are really dictated by the close personal affection which has made a man desire a woman for his wife. Of the fifty Balades in Gower's collection, five, it may be remembered, were written for lovers who sought marriage. But such writing was the exception, not the rule; and the true basis of the decision of the ladies of best fame in France, assembled in their Courts of Love, that love and marriage could not coexist, lies in the broad line of separation it was thought convenient to make between the foreign relation of the poet to the lady whom he honoured with his rhyming, and his home relation to the lady whom he made his wife. There must be no false position for the berhymed gentlewoman, no equivocal interpreting of compliments she publicly received. They were constructed skilfully according to accepted formulas, at which young gentlemen laboured as they labour now at Euclid, and in the working out of them, as we have seen, knights underwent for many years a competitive examination at the Floral Games, first instituted, in the year of Chaucer's birth, by Clementina Isaure, Countess of Toulouse, and imitated throughout France. There love-poets, thrice victorious over competitors, earned their degree of doctor in the "gaye science." The question was of a science, not a passion. We may very safely assume that ladies like Queen Eleanor and Ermengard, Viscountess of Narbonne, did not mean to disgrace their sex when they upheld the doctrine that if a lady married a knight who had been publicly devoted to her, that sort of relation came then to an end between them, and another man became entitled to her public favour. The intention of such women must have been to keep unsullied

the honour of their sex, by maintaining nonsubstantiation as one of the chief conditions of poetical "true love." As long as it remained a common understanding that the most extravagant formulas of the poet showed only his ingenuity, having, in fact, no more literal application than the French all-devotedness, or the English obedient humble servitude that still lies at the foot even of a cold business letter, the belauded women held their reputation safe. Wits might be free to frolic, and ingenious compliments might fly, like tennis-players' balls, to any height accordant with the player's strength and skill, or be set spinning and rebounding in any fashion and by any trick of hand.

There was a compliment, of course, in the selection of the lady to whom rhymes were dedicated, but it was the compliment of literary dedication; and that sort of writing, in all forms, remained even until the end of the last century, a playground for extravagant exaggerations. But it is not to be forgotten that, in practice, from the nature of the case it was impossible to give to such a principle as this the force of an unbending rule. The trifling was of a sort that had its perils. The ghost raised might wrestle with and overthrow the speaker of the formulas that gave it shape. While women of refinement, following an honest instinct, firmly discouraged the confusion of the prevalent bandying of public phrases of devotion with the flesh and blood realities of life, women without refinement would find in the flatteries of public gallantry swift guides to their own degradation. The theory might be ethereal, but what might be the practice when all formulas of conventional tenderness could be followed by such a courtly poet as, say, Henry VI. of Hohenstauffen, expert in tenderness of the troubadours, a man who gouged out women's eyes and was without pity for the weakness or care for the honour of the sex on which he executed his verse exercises? In the sense, then, of Eleanor and Ermengard, Chaucer's innovation may have been a blunder when he made the types of wedded troth, Admetus and Alcestis, King and Queen under Venus at the Court of Love. But, for all that, Chaucer was right. The English mind is not apt at refinements which take shadow for substance, and, as the story proceeds, we may find more than one writer among us who, having dedicated to some lady in pure innocence the usual series of exercises upon the one

fashionable theme, is taken at his word, and supposed to have been love-sick or profligate, when he meant only to be courteous.

Usually, then, in the times of which we are now speaking, it is not the beauty and grace of his own mistress that is celebrated in a poet's verse. Even Chaucer, who broke bounds, is in love verses chiefly eloquent upon the Duchess Blanche; though carefully detaching himself from his subject, and putting all her praise in the mouth of her lover and her husband. He leaves us no poem except this, which is called his 'Dream,' in which we may suppose his own Philippa to have stirred his heart to song.

Chaucer's Dream

tells how the poet lay alone thinking of his lady on a night in May. In a lodge beside a well in a forest, where he rested after hunting, he had a half-waking dream.

He thought he was in an isle with wall and gate of glass. Upon every gate a thousand golden vanes turned musically, each with a pair of singing-birds upon it; and the towers were carved over with flowers of rare colours. No men were to be seen there, only the goodliest of ladies. They were all of the same age, except one, who was elder and mistress of that company; and although she might neither sing nor dance, of as glad cheer as any. No pleasant thing was wanting to that isle. Its ladies remained beautiful until they died. It was well for the poet to have such grace to see the ladies and the place, but presently the elder lady came to him with smiling cheer and "Benedicite," asking how he, being a man, came thither. He replied, that he had lodged that night by a well and slept, and now was in the isle; but how he came thither he knew not. Why should he feign a long process to one who seemed such a princess. He was her willing prisoner. Then this lady took him by the hand, assembled the others, and explained to him their wonder that he had come among them without boat or sail. She said that, although they were gentlewomen loth to displease any wight, the custom of their country would not suffer him to stay with them, and that for two reasons: one, that their ordinance allowed no men to dwell among them; and the other, that their queen was out of the realm, wherefore they feared to do amiss while she was absent.

But while the poet smarted under this decree, there hurried to them a lady with a crowd about her, telling that the Queen was come. Then all hastened to meet her, and left the poet by himself, following slowly and considering how he might obtain the Queen's favour to stay there till Fortune had sent him some happy guide to his own home. He saw the ladies on their knees joyously welcoming their Queen, and suddenly the poet had the greatest joy to see that, with the Queen, his own lady was come. They were clothed alike, and there was come with them also a knight, whereat the other ladies wondered, till the Queen told them her story.

Following the custom of the island, which requires its Queen every seven years to travel to the heavenly hermitage that stands on a high

rock in a strange sea—long, perilous voyage that lasts the lifetime of all to whom the wind is not a friend—she had gone to the rock. There she was to find the tree which bears in certain years three apples. Whoever has them is kept, during the next seven years, from all displeasaunces. The first apple keeps beauty and youth from fading; the second apple nourishes, by the sight alone, with food pleasanter than partridge and pheasant; the third apple ensures to those who have it all that serves to their delight. The getting of these apples every seven years had caused the ladies of the isle to live like goddesses. But this time, said the Queen, when she went to the rock for them,—

“ I fond aloft
My sister which that herë stands,
Having those apples in her hands,
Avising them and nothing said,
But lookëd as she were well paid :
And as I stood her to behold,
Thinking how my joyes were cold,
Sith I those apples have ne might,
Even with that so came this knight,
And in his armes, of me aware,
Me tooke, and to his ship me bare,
And said, though him I never had seen,
Yet had I long his lady been.”

Then the Queen would have died of distress if the lady had not sought to comfort her and put in her hand one of the three apples. She entreated the knight also with womanly words, and took the Queen and knight to her own ship, which was so wonderfully wrought, so clean, so rich, and so arrayed, that they were both content and paid. The lady had thus brought the Queen back to her own island.

Then all the world of ladies prepared to kneel before the poet's lady. They were at her commandment, and his lady's honour in such place was to the poet a great joy.

Presently the Queen of the island turning to the aged lady said, she would that the knight were in his own country, “and I in peace and he at ease. This were a way us both to please, if it might be.” Then that lady went soberly to the knight, taking with her two others, and reproved him gently for his violence. At the reproof he swooned and looked as though he would be dead. The Queen came to his help. It must not be said that he died there of her rigour. And first she laid her hand upon his heart and spoke to him. But he complained, and called on Death. It was not till she had kissed him that he tried to rise and kneel to her. But he fell as he rose, so that the Queen caught him in her arms. Now, her intention was to put him in his barge that evening and bid him go.

But now, too, there were seen ten thousand ships coming over the waves; ships richly painted, and with birds singing aloud their ballads and lays right joyously. The aged lady wept, for this must be the company of the knight coming to seek him. They had better shut their gates, arm themselves, as usual, in good language, and shoot fair words. But as they went thus armed they met the God of Love. He told them

that their glass walls and shut gates availed them not to stay his passing. His ships came to land, and he went with a great crowd to where the knight lay, showed his wrath at the condition of his servant, bade the Queen be the knight's leech. Then, angry at her long refusal of his service, the God of Love retired a pace or two, and drawing his bow a large draught up to the ear, wounded her to the heart with an arrow ground sharp and new. And thereupon the knight was told that he should have two joys for every pain he had endured.

The God of Love went then to the poet's lady, treated her as a goddess, and said she was the Princess of Beauty and Goodness, but should have more pity. She was a creature whose name was to live in books full of pleasaunce.

“And as methought, more friendly
Unto my lady and goodlely
He spake, than any that was there,
And for th' apples I trow it were,
That she had in possession.”

What he desired of her was by request, and presently she knelt upon the flowers, promising to obey the God of Love, who took her in his arms, and said—

“‘You have a servaunt, one
That truer living is there none,
Wherefore good were, seeing his trouth,
That on his painës ye had routh,
And purpose you to heare his speech,
Fully avisèd him to leech;
For of one thing ye may be sure
He will be yours while he may dare.’
And with that word, right on his game,
Methought he lough and told my name.”

Hereat the poet was in great alarm. But after this Lord had said all and long played with her, the Lady answered with a smile, which put more joyous doubt into the perplexity of his devoted love.

While he thus stood, the poet saw the Queen of the Isle present to that great Lord of Love a bill declaring her submission. The Lord smiled, called the island his new conquest, and took the Queen into great council. Presently he bade all who would wear flowers or his lusty colour gather next day in the plain, where he would be seen in state, for he would be lord evermore of them, and of the isle and all. They waited there all night,

“And some to read old romances
Them occupied for their pleasaunces,
Some to make verelaies and laies,
And some to other diverse plaies:
And I to me a romance tooke
And as I reading was the booke

came sunrise, and the plain was thronged. Two hours afterwards the mighty Lord, all in flowers, was in the air in all their sight. There

stood up a persuasive counsellor, servant of love, who set forth the occasion of the gathering, and the intent of his mighty lord to bring them all into accord ere his departing. That mighty lord then bade the knight and the poet take their ladies and be no more sick. They knelt to the god, and then went and besought their ladies, declaring themselves their two servants until death. At evening the Lord of Love departed, saying he would soon return and make long stay upon the island.

Next day the poet's Lady took leave of the Queen, who offered to resign to her the island,

“ If it might please her there to dwell,
And said for ever her lineage
Should to my Lady doe homage,
And hers be hole withouten more,
Ye and all theirs for evermore.”

[Obviously this could not have been written for John of Gaunt, with his Duchess Blanche in the part of Island Queen, and Chaucer's own Philippa for the God of Love's Princess of Beauty.] The poet's Lady was accompanied next day with honour to her ship and sailed away. But he ran madly after her into the sea, till a wave overthrew him, and then he was tossed in the water till the men of the ship drew him in to save his life. There as he lay dying his Lady came with pity, told him that she would obey that great Lord's will, and put one of her apples in his sleeve. This caused him to arise in health and gladness, and the poet and the lady sailed happily together towards her country, where they landed and were received with joyous cheer.

“ With which landing tho I woke
And found my chamber full of smoke,
My cheekës eke unto the eares,
And all my body, wet with tears.”

He rose from his bed and walked. He found a winding stair. By this he crept up in search of a more easy resting-place, and lay down on a bed in a chamber painted with stories old and diverse. There he slept and dreamt again.

And in his dream he was again in the island, where it was agreed at an assembly that the knight should marry the Queen and be King, and that he should depart that night to prepare for his marriage,

“ And returne with such an host
That wedded might be least and most.”

A time was fixed for the feast and coronation, and the knight departed in a little barge,—

“ Which barge was as a man's thought,
After his pleasure to him brought.
The Queene herselfe accustomed aye
In the samë barge to play.
It needeth neither mast ne rother,
I have not heard of such another.

No maister for the governaunce,
He sayled by thought and pleasaunce
Without labour east and west,
All was one, calm or tempest."

The poet travelled with the knight in the same barge, and saw him worthily received in his own country. There the old king, the knight's father, had died seven years before. He bade his barons, when he died, remember his young son, who was gone on a great unknown voyage to seek a princess whom he desired more than riches.

"For her great name that floured so
That in that time there was no mo
Of her estate, ne so well named,
For borne was none that ever her blamed."

Here, then, was the young prince come back to take his throne and to prepare for marriage with the princess to whom he had given his word to return by an appointed day. He told his people all the story "in plain English undisguised,"

"And how his day he might not passe,
Without diffame and great blame,
And to him for ever shame."

He asked them how he might within ten days have sixty thousand ready to go with him to his marriage-feast. The lords in council found that, to make due provision, he must give them fifteen days. The prince grieved sorely for the dishonour of his word, and waited fifteen days; at the end of which time he was told that sixty thousand noble blameless knights were by a river bank all ready to embark. The little barge, "as a man's thought," took them all on board,

"Horse, mule, trusse ne bagage
Salade, speare, gard-brace ne page
But was lodged and room enough."

The poet went with them. But when they reached the island, where they thought to sleep in heaven that night, a lady clothed in black met the Prince with sad cries. The Queen was dead for sorrow of his great untruth. And of the ladies of the isle many were dead, the rest dying; for they were all sworn to eat nothing and drink nothing, and each had a rod for smiting such as would not weep, or such as made countenance to sleep. With such beating they were all as blue as cloth new dyed. Then the Prince stabbed himself for despair and died. His lords ran wild, and the lady in black bade them give to the Queen slain by their breach of promise a chapel in their land.

So the Prince and the Queen and the dead ladies were carried in new hearses over the sea to a city and a royal abbey of black nuns, who said orisons about the hearses.

But on the morrow there befel a wonder. A bird brightly feathered blue and green, with rays of gold between, alighted on the Queen's hearse, and sang low and softly three songs. Then an old knight, by

lifting his hand to his hood as a prince passed, frightened the bird, which, in its haste to fly out, beat its wings against a painted window, fell bleeding to the ground and died. There it lay for an hour or more, until a score of birds had gathered with noise of lament at the broken window. One presently pierced through, bringing in his beak of nine colours a green flowerless herb,

“ Full of smale leaves and plaine,
Swart and long with many a veine,”

and laid it down by the head of his dead fellow. In half an hour the herb had flowered and its seed was ripe. Then the bird put one of the seeds in his fellow's beak, and the dead bird stood up and pruned himself. Presently both took their flight singing.

But the abbess, who knew the virtue of the herb, caused it to spring and blossom again on the dry hearse of the Queen, and put three of its seeds in the Queen's mouth. Upon which the Queen rose with a smiling countenance. When she was told what had passed, she prayed that she might have seeds to put in the mouth of the prince, which

“ so him cured
That within a little space,
Lusty and fresh on live he was
And in good hele, and hole of speech,
And lough and said, ‘ Gramercy, leech.’ ”

Then the Queen and the abbess restored life to the dead ladies, and next day there was a Parliament held, at which it was resolved to hold the marriage festival within the isle, with jousts, tourneys, and other sports of arms. Two ladies were sent in the barge with knights and squires and certain letters as an embassage to seek the poet's Lady in every part and bid her to the feast. “ For, but she come, all woll be wast.” After fourteen days they returned with her.

Then the feast was held in tents, near a wood, in open country betwixt a river and a well. It lasted for three months. On the second day, when all others had passed their marriage night, the Prince, the Queen, and all the rest, besought the poet's Lady to accept his service.

“ And for there should be no nay
They stint jousting all the day.”

So the marriage was agreed upon, and was to take place the same night. The happy poet was led with ladies, knights, and squires, and a great host of ministers, and with music, to a tent that served for parish church. There the archbishop and archdeacon sang the service, and after that they dined and danced, and the joyous sound of thousands of instruments troubled the poet in his sleep.

So that he leapt from his bed, and all was still. And there was no creature there, “ save on the walls old portraiture of horsemen, hawks and hounds, a hurt deer full of wounds, some like bitten, some hurt with shot, and, as my dream, seemed that was not.” Thus in grief he was left to pray that his Lady would give substance to his dreaming, or that

he might go back into his dream, and always serve her in its isle of pleasaunce. Here the poet ends his play of fancy with a hope that he might "dure a thousand years and ten in her good will, Amen, amen." And adds a Balade written in honour of her who may give him the bliss that he desireth oft.

Chaucer, it should be noted, here, as in his earliest verse, and as in his John of Gaunt poems, still celebrates a love whose crown is marriage. The play of fancy in this poem is all his own. Close kindred to the poems fashionable in his time, they were his own playful turns in a quick sequence of visionary incidents, his own clear graphic verse, his own wholesome and honest feeling, which he poured out, I believe, in this instance, as a carol of his love for his own chosen mate. Chaucer's other poems treating upon love deal with it generally, or are written for his patron, John of Gaunt; but 'Chaucer's Dream' belonged, I think, to the realities of his own life, and was written for the lady whom he cared most to amuse. Yet, if dictated by an actual love, surely it is a sport of fancy that will not bear the weight of heavy literal interpretations.

No foreign source has been found for it. The opening is said to have been suggested by Machault's 'Dit du Lion.' But the 'Dit du Lion' is a fragment describing different kinds of lovers, without a thought in it that we might suppose to have been directly copied in the 'Dream.' The Maidens' Isle of Pleasaunce is said to have come of legends of St. Patrick's Paradise; and a poem by Marie de France is pointed to, containing no more than both poets have in common with nearly all the rhymers of their time. The visit to the island rock has a strained parallel found for it in the navigation of St. Brandon, who sailed seven years with God for pilot, and saw marvels. It is urged that Celtic poetry took pleasure in apple-trees. It is observed that Philip de Vitry, in a translation of Ovid's 'Metamorphoses,' speaks of Faith, Hope, and Charity, as three golden apples. It is said that there is a ship gifted with intelligence in Marie de France's 'Lai de Gugemer,' as well as in the 'Dit du Lion;' but such ships were not Chaucer's little boat "as a man's thought." It is said finally that, in the 'Lay of Eliduc,' life is restored by placing magic flowers in the mouth. But that is a notion older than the 'Lay of Eliduc;' for so Glaucus, the

son of Minos and Pasiphae was revived after he had been smothered in a cask of honey. These indistinct resemblances¹ in no degree weaken our sense of the substantial originality and native charm of 'Chaucer's Dream.'

William Godwin,² adopting the opinion of Thomas Speght, describes this poem as an epithalamium upon the marriage of John of Gaunt, then Earl of Richmond, to the Princess Blanche, on the 19th of May, 1359, and thinks that it was written at the time, because "in the eighth line the author speaks of May as the season of its composition." But it was part of the recipe for writing poems of this sort that the good poet should let a breath of April or May pass over the first chords of his music. Mr. Godwin thinks much also of the fact that Chaucer represents his fabulous persons to have married, as the Earl of Richmond really was married, in May, and says of 'Chaucer's Dream,' that "there is scarcely one of Chaucer's productions the date and object of which are more clearly ascertained by internal evidence." The other internal evidence relied upon is that Chaucer in the poem says he dreamed

"as he lay
Within a lodge out of the way,
Beside a well in a forest."

The well is an old stock property of mediæval verse; but Mr. Godwin sees evidence here of Chaucer's residence in the lodge by Woodstock Park, where there was actually a spring called Rosamond's Well. Chaucer describes also the chamber in which he dreamt as

"paint
Full of stories old and diverse,"

which "suggests to us ideas of competence and ease, sufficiently confirmed by the remaining vestiges of his habitation; where the chief thing discoverable is the wall inclosing a spacious apartment, said by the persons now residing in the vicinity to have been his chapel." But we have seen that "Chaucer's

¹ Cited from Sandras ('Étude sur G. Chaucer'), who lays stress on them, and endeavours to prove therefrom that this poem of Chaucer's is from Celtic sources through the French.

² 'Life of Chaucer,' second edition (1804), vol. ii. pp. 185-204.

House" at Woodstock belonged to the poet's wealthy son Thomas, and most probably derived its name from him. There is no evidence that the poet ever lived at Woodstock.

The other internal evidence declared to be so very strong is the reference to the poet's own love. "His nights," Mr. Godwin observes, "are sleepless, and he wets his pillow with his tears: and, in the conclusion of the poem, we find him dreaming that his lady is prevailed upon by the importunity of the knight and princess, and consents to his suit. He awakes, however, and regrets that it is but delusion." With this is connected literal belief that in the 'Book of the Duchess,' written certainly upon the Death of Blanche, "Chaucer is still a lover, and his love is still unrequited," and "he goes on to assign a precise date to his malady."

"I holde it to be a sicknesse
That I have suffered this eight yere."

"So during the whole period from the marriage to the death of Duchess Blanche, Chaucer," says Godwin, "had remained an unsuccessful suitor." She lived ten years after her marriage, but Chaucer calls the period eight years, because he "appears to have been a negligent chronologist."

Mr. Godwin's best piece of internal evidence is that John of Gaunt and Blanche were married at Reading, in Berkshire, and that Chaucer gave a "very exact account of its geography" in lines which say that the marriage he saw in his dream took place in open country by a wood, between a river and a well, at a place where there was no abbey, church, house, or village. There were houses certainly at Reading, and churches, and its abbey was one of the three greatest in England; but it is a great fact that there is a river at Reading, the Kennett, with the Thames close by. Wherefore, as true as there is a river in Macedon and a river in Monmouth, Reading must be the place of the wedding-feast in Chaucer's 'Isle of Pleasaunce.'

But though the marriage of the Duchess Blanche be not figured in 'Chaucer's Dream,' there is no doubt what-
ever that we have a poem upon John of Gaunt's mourn-
ing for the death of his wife Blanche, which happened in 1369
when Chaucer was forty-one, and John of Gaunt was twenty

The Book of
the Duchess.

nine years old, in the piece once called 'Chaucer's Dream,' and afterwards

The Book of the Duchess.

The poet was melancholy and sleepless, from a cause that he holds to be

"a sicknesse
That I have suffered this eight yere,
And yet my boot is never the nere."

As Mr. Godwin reads it, love sickness, and not for eight years but for ten. Being sleepless, he sat up in his bed to drive the night away with a book, and he read in Ovid's 'Metamorphoses' the tale of Ceyx and Alcyone, to the popularity of which tale Chaucer and Gower alike testify, for it is by Chaucer here, as by Gower in the 'Confessio Amantis,' transferred into our literature. The tale of the drowned king and of the God of Sleep who sent a dream to the bereaved Alcyone, caused the poet to vow playfully a feather-bed of dove's down and other like fees to that Morpheus, "if he can make me sleepë soon." Then suddenly he slept over his book, and dreamed that he lay in his bed on a May morning with the birds singing a solemn service on the roof over his head. The walls of his chamber were painted with the tale of Troy, its windows with the 'Romaunt of the Rose,' and through their glass the sun shone from a cloudless sky. Then hearing the huntsman's horn outside, he joined the hunters and hied with them to the forest. Asking a lad, as he went, who hunted there, he found that it was Emperor Octavian. The hart they hunted in the forest stole away, the hounds were at fault, and a whelp "that had yfollowed and coud ne good," fawned at the poet's feet, fled when he would have caught him, and led to a flowery green under the complete shade of great trees where many kinds of beasts were feasting.

In that wood the dreamer found a man in black, who sat with his back to a huge oak tree, "a wonder wel-faring knight" of four-and-twenty, with but little hair upon his beard, with drooped hand and pale face.

"He made of rime ten verses or twelve
Of a complaint to himselve."

They were twelve lines of lament that Death had left him and taken his lady. Then his colour changed, and he seemed bloodless. The poet greeted him; but the mourner argued only with his own thought, until presently he saw that he had been greeted by one who stood unhooded before him, and made courteous excuse. The poet spoke to him of the hunt. The mourner answered that he did not think thereon. The poet desired to console him in his sorrow. The mourner answered at length that he could not be consoled—

"For whoso seeth me first on morrow
May saine he hath met with sorrow,
For I am sorrow, and sorrow is I."

He has played chess with false Fortune and lost. The poet reminds him in vain of the philosophy of Socrates. He will tell what is the bliss that he has lost. He tells then how he was happy thrall to love and loved one whom it were better serve for nought than with another to be well; she was comely in dance, sweet in carol and song, with hair not red, yellow, or brown, but most like gold, with eyes "debonaire, good, glad, and sad," simple and true,—

"It was no counterfeted thing:
It was her ownë pure loking."

She was neither too sober nor too glad; she was white, ruddy, fresh, and lively-hued, every day her beauty newed, and there was not to be found

"In all her face a wicked signe,
For it was sad, simple, and benigne."

Her speech was sweet; her true tongue free from scorn, healing and harmless. The mourning lover dwelt upon the beauty of her neck and ivory throat:—

"And fairë white she hate
That was my ladies namë right.
She was thereto faire and bright;
She had not her namë wrong."

Dwelling yet more and more upon her beauty and her wit without malice, her steadfastness, her honour blameless as the chosen resting-place of Truth himself, her simple sincerity with all. On her, the mourner said,

"Was wholly all my lovë laid,
For certes she was that swete wife,
My suffisaunce, my lust, my life,
Mine hope, mine heale, and alle blesse,
My world's welfare, and my goddesse;
And I wholly hers and every dele."

Had he been perfect as any hero of old, he must have loved her who was good as Penelope or as "the noble wife Lucrece." The mourner told the growth of his young love, for he was right young when he first saw his lady. "But what," asked the poet, "is the loss he spoke of? Will she not love him, or has he done amiss?" The mourner answered that he had made songs to her as best he could, and this was the first song:

"Lord it maketh mine herte light
Whan I think on that swete wight
That is so semely one to se,
And wish to God it might so be
That she wold hold me for her knight,
My lady that is so fayre and bright."

Then, knowing her gentleness and bounty, he told his tale, and she said Nay all utterly. He stole away to his grief, and came again another year, and showed his faithfulness, on which she gave him her whole mercy, and, her first gift, a ring. Then followed years of bliss:

“ For truëly that swetë wight,
 When I had wrong and she the right,
 She would alway so goodly
 Forgeve me so debonairly ;
 In all my youth, in all my chance,
 She tooke me in her governaunce,
 Therewith she was alway so true,
 Our joy was ever ilichë newe . . .

* * * * *
 ‘ Sir ’ (quod I) ‘ where is she now ? ’ ”

At the word “ Now ” the mourner became dead as a stone. And the tender recollection of what Duchess Blanche had been is closed as with a single dull stroke of her knell :

“ ‘ God wote, alas, right that was she.’
 ‘ Alas, sir, how ? What may that be ?’
 ‘ She is dedde.’—‘ Nay.’—‘ Yes, by my trouth.’
 ‘ Is that your losse ? By God it is routhe.’ ”

The hunters now returned, and Chaucer rode with them to a castle, of which the bell struck twelve, and awoke him to the knowledge that he was lying in bed and had fallen asleep over the tale of Alcyone and Ceyx and the God of Sleep.

This is a piece designed according to the usual plan of mediæval courtly literature. There was the customary dream, May morning, and so forth, the romance figure of Emperor Octavian from the tale of Charlemagne, and the chess play with Fortune imitated, almost translated, from a favourite passage of the ‘ Roman de la Rose.’¹ The praise of Duchess Blanche is

¹ The following lines, cited by M. Sandras, are sufficient evidence :—

“ Therewith Fortune said, check here
 And mate in the mid-point of the
 checkere,
 With a paune errant, alas,
 Full craftier to play she was
 Than Athalus that made the game.”
Book of Duchess, s. 658, &c.

“ Eschec et mat li alla dire
 Desus son destrier auferrant
 Du trait d’un paonnet errant
 Oû mileu de son eschiquier.
 * * * * *
 Car ainsine le dist Athalus
 Qui des echecs controva l’us.”
Roman de la Rose, v. 6704, &c.

Of Fortune again,—

“ She false is, and ever laughing
 With one eye, and that other weeping
 That is brought up, she set all
 downe :
 I liken her to the Scorpiowne
 * * * * *
 She is th’ envious charite.”
Book of Duchess, l. 632, &c.

“ D’un œil rit, de l’autre lerne ;
 C’est l’orgueilleuse Humilité,
 C’est l’envieuse Charité.
 La peinture d’une vipère
 Qu’est mortable
 En riens à li ne se compère.”
Machault, Remède de Fortune.

said to contain, in a passage or two, recollections from a poem by Guillaume de Machault, the '*Remède de Fortune*,' in which Hope gives him an allegorical shield, and brings to him the lady of his thoughts, whose favour he had despaired of, but who agrees to be his friend, and therefore enjoys with him a brilliant reception in a neighbouring chateau. The poems, as that sketch of Machault's is enough to show, differ altogether in sentiment and in detail. They have, in fact, no more resemblance than belongs to the sameness of taste shown in all the courtly literature of that time, and the occasional imitation by the English poet of a turn of phrase in verses with which he and all his courtly patrons were familiar.¹ Machault and Chaucer were both living and writing at the date of Blanche's death, Machault dying eighty years old or more in 1377. Machault's '*Remède de Fortune*' was written before '*The Book of the Duchess*,' but Froissart's '*Paradis d'Amour*' was written twenty-three years later, and contains evidence, in one or two undeniable imitations of '*The Book of the Duchess*,'² that between Chaucer and the courtly French poets of his time liking was mutual.

¹ M. Sandras points out resemblances between lines in the '*Book of the Duchess*' and lines in the *Remède de Fortune*. Only three are at all close: one was quoted in the preceding note, another matches the lines beginning "And such a goodly swete speech," with

"Et sa gracieuse parole
Qui n'estoit diverse ne folle
Etrange ne mal ordenée,
Hautaine, mès bien affrenée,
Cueillie à point et de saison,
Fondée sur toute raison," &c.

The other parallel is in the lines—

"For certes she was that swete wife
My suffisaunce, my lust, my life,
Mine hope, mine heale, and all blesse."

In the lines of the *Remède de Fortune* :—

"Car c'est mes cuers, c'est ma créance,
C'est mes désirs, c'est m'espérance,
C'est ma santé." . . .

² M. Sandras admits that it is here Froissart who must be imitating Chaucer, the earliest possible date of Froissart's poem being 1384, as it contains a reference to the marriage of Philip le Hardi, duke of Burgundy, with

The conventional poetry of his day, however, was not the influence which made Chaucer a celebrator of that home delight of love over which Alcestis was queen under Venus. It is faithful wedded love that 'The Book of the Duchess' honours. We have here also the individual portrait of a gentle woman who had been the poet's friend, and in whom he had seen a pattern of pure womanly grace and wifely worth. An English sense of the true beauty of womanhood lives in this song over the grave of her whose

" simple recorde
Was found as true as any bond,
Or trouth of any mannes hond."

Noticeable also in this poem is the delicacy with which it avoids rude touch upon a sacred grief. The dead wife is honoured, and even her name of Blanche is told by an allusion to its fitness. But the mourner is idealised. There is no intrusive hand laid on his grief, no jarring of ill-timed preachment. Such she was, so simple and so womanly, so pure and true. And she is dead. Let there be no diffuse phrases troubling grief with the word-comfort of those on whom only the shadow of its substance falls.

Margaret, daughter of the Count of Flanders. Chaucer begins the 'Book of the Duchess' with the lines,—

" I have great wonder by this light,
How I live, for day ne night
I may not sleepe wel-nigh nought."

And Froissart thus begins the 'Paradis d'Amour':

" Je sui de moi en grant merveille
Comment je vifz, quand tant je veille."

Again, Froissart has in this poem as name of a son of sleep, Enclimpostair, for which there is no parallel but Chaucer's—

" Morpheus and Eclympasteire
That was the god of sleepes heire."

CHAPTER VI.

CHAUCER'S writings have now been discussed, as nearly as possible in chronological order, as far as the year 1369, date of the death of Duchess Blanche. What is to be said of 'Troilus and Criseyde,' which may have been written in some year between the marriage and death of the Duchess, has been left till now, partly because the group of poems to which John of Gaunt's first wife gave rise ought not to be widely separated in the story of his mind, and partly because I believe this poem to be really of later date than those writings of Chaucer's which display the influence of what was in his time the court literature of France upon the poetry he wrote while under the age of forty. As his genius ripened he cared less for the conventional graces of French song, more for Virgil, Ovid, Statius, and for Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio. From the first he had read them. As to the moderns, his translations from the 'Teseide' and the 'Filostrato' in his own earliest poem, 'The Court of Love,' must have been made when the 'Teseide' had not been ten years written, and as soon as it was possible for a copy of the 'Filostrato,' little more, if more, than a year old, to come within reach of a bookish page at the English court. His 'Troilus and Criseyde' is an enlarged English version of the 'Filostrato,' remarkable, as we shall find, for the illustration it affords of Chaucer's character in his treatment of the Italian original, and for its evidence of growth of the dramatic element in Chaucer's power as a writer. A tradition has come down to us on the authority of Lydgate, who was young when Chaucer died,¹ that

"In youth he made a translacion
Of a boke whiche called is Trophe²
In Lumbarde tonge, as men may rede and se;
And in our vulgar, long er that he deyde,
Gave it the name of Troilus and Creseyde."

¹ Lydgate's Prologue to the 'Fall of Princes,' st. 41.

² I have never seen a right explanation of Lydgate's use of 'Trophe' as a

Gower, writing between 1393 and 1398, represents it as a common pastime of young ladies "to rede and here of Troylus,"¹ and it was natural to ascribe to the young days of its writer that which became the favourite love poem of the cultivated English youth. But comparison with its original will show in Chaucer's 'Troylus and Criseyde' a ripeness, both of purpose and invention, that connects it with the work of his maturer years. I cannot think that Chaucer was of unripe age when he produced this poem.

Again, if Chaucer had been young when he wrote 'Troylus and Criseyde,' he could not well have dedicated it to the "moral Gower" and the philosophical Strode. Gower began to write after May, 1381, when Chaucer was fifty-three years old, the 'Vox Clamantis,' which, so far as we know, earned for him from Chaucer the epithet "moral." Strode also is mentioned by Chaucer as late as 1392 as tutor to his son Lewis.² Strode is said to have attained repute in 1370, and Gower might very possibly have written his long French poem, the 'Speculum Meditantis,' ten or eleven years earlier than the 'Vox Clamantis,' and for that been entitled "moral." But even in 1370 Chaucer's age was forty-one. It is also worthy of remark that in the poem which seems to come next in order of time, the 'House of Fame,' Chaucer speaks of himself as "old," and in the next following, the 'Legend of Good Women,' there is a dedication to the queen; but Richard II. had no queen before Anne of Bohemia, "Good Queen Anne," whom he married in 1382, when Chaucer was fifty-four years old.

Judgment, founded upon style, however, has in Chaucer's case a special liability to error, because we have hardly a clue to the date at which any of those poems were written which he grouped together in his later life as 'Canterbury Tales.' It is probable that many of them were produced while he invented the machinery that bound them all in one. But we learn from himself that the very first of them, the Knight's Tale, being his version of Boccaccio's 'Teseide,' was known, though

name for the story of Troylus and Criseyde. It evidently points to Criseyde's perfidy, and is related to *τροπή*, a turning. In modern Italian the word is *truffa*, "slight, roguery, roguish trick;" its synonyms being, according to the Della Cruscan Vocabulary, *inganno* and *furberia*.

¹ See p. 124.

² See p. 139.

not widely, as a separate work of his, at least four years¹ before the poet's fairy wand had touched the host of the Tabard. The distribution of but half a dozen of the 'Canterbury Tales' into their right places in the history of Chaucer's inner life, would modify any impression formed on a distinct study of only those poems of his which he was unable to incorporate with tales said to be told by fellow travellers for 'ech of you to schortë with youre weie.' But what Englishman who thinks at all of Chaucer is ever able to dissociate him from some notion, however misty, of his 'Canterbury Tales'?

If we think of him, then, as a living, growing, well-tuned man, and not as a barren subject for scholastic subdivisions, we shall lay no false emphasis on a rough but convenient division of the works of Chaucer into (1) those written before he was forty years old, when, with some following of Latin or Italian authors, he was content to take his models from the French court poetry then in fashion, and (2) those written after he was forty years old, when he had risen high above Machault, that master of fine gentleman poets, and, with occasional use of the French style, his mind found its true comrades in Virgil, Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio.

'The Complaint of Mars and Venus' Chaucer says that he translated from Gransson, and 'La belle Dame sans Translation from Gransson. Mercie,' ascribed to him, was taken from Alain Chartier. Of Gransson, M. Paulin Paris cites one pastoral. M. Sandras has found two pieces of his in honour of St. Valentine, and a Complaint. No more seems to be left of him. Alain Chartier, of whom more verses survive, was about fourteen years old at the date of Chaucer's death, and survived him half a century. The translation of his 'Belle Dame sans Merci' was not, therefore, from Chaucer's hand. Having dismissed these trifles, there is no more to be said of the relation of Chaucer's mind to the school of Machault, except when we note the occasion given by

¹ He cites among works that he had written—

"The Deeth of Blaunche the Duchesse,
And the Parlement of Foules, as I gesse,
And al the love of Palamon and Arcite
Of Thebes, though the storye ys knowen lyte."

Legend of Good Women, ll. 418-421.

Machault's nephew and pupil Deschamps to the writing by Chaucer of his poem of 'The Flower and the Leaf,' in or after the year 1387.

We are now at 1369, date of the death of Duchess Blanche, and I think it was not long before or after, most probably after, this date that Chaucer wrote a modified English version of Boccaccio's 'Filostrato,' as the story of

His version
of Boccaccio's
'Filostrato.'

Troilus and Criseyde.

Chaucer's poem is in five books and 8251 lines.

In the First Book "the great divine that cleped was Calcas," foreknowing the fall of Troy, becomes renegade to the Greeks, leaving his daughter, fairest Criseyde, as a widow and alone, to be protected by the Trojans, whose deeds during the siege—

"In Omer, or in Dares, or in Dite

Who-so that kan, may rede hem as thai write."

And so befel, when April came with its flowers, the Trojans in their best array went to the temple to hold the feast of a "relike hight Palladion." "Among these other folke was Criseyda, in wydewes habit blak." The king's son, Troilus, led his young knights up and down, beholding aye the ladies of the town; and Troilus, who held love to be folly, jested at any knight or squire of his company who "gan for to sigh or lete his eyen bayten on any woman that he koude aspye." Wherefore the God of Love, drawing his bow, hit Troilus at the full, and,—

"As proudë Bayard gynneth for to skyppe
Out of the wey, so priketh him his corne,
Till he a lassch have of the longë whippe.
Than thynketh he, 'Thogh I praunce al byforne
First in the trayse, ful fat and newë shorne,
Yet am I but an hors, and horses lawe
I mote endure, and with my feeres drawe,"—

So fared it by that proud knight and king's son, who thought to fordo the law of kind. His eye stayed upon Criseyde, and he also became thrall to love. Then he sighed and groaned in his chamber, and made a song "as write mine author called Lolius," but the song is Petrarch's most beautiful sonnet 'S'amor non è, che dunque è quel ch' i' sento?'¹ which the poet translates, and of which this is the first stanza:

¹ Petrarch, Pt. I., sonnet 102. Chaucer translates it amplified into three of his seven-lined stanzas. The first four lines of the sonnet make Chaucer's first stanza, the four following lines the second, and the other six lines make the third. I quote, for readier comparison, the four lines corresponding to the stanza given in the text:

"S' Amor non è, che dunque è quel ch' i' sento?
Ma s'egli è Amor, per Dio, che cosa, e quale?
Se buona, ond' è l'effetto aspro mortale?
Se ria, ond' è sì dolce ogni tormento?"

"If no love is, O God, what fele I so?
 And if love is, what thinge and which is he?
 If love be gode, from whennes cometh my wo?
 If it be wykke a wonder thynketh me,
 Whenne every tornment and adversité
 That cometh of him, may to me savory thynke.
 For ay thirst I the more that iche it drynke."

None would abide peril of arms longer than Troylus, and he fought not for hate of the Greeks or rescue of Troy, but that Criseyde might like him the more for his renown. Then he fell sick; and for shame, as one who had held lovers least in reverence, disguising his love sickness, said that he had fever.

So he bewailed in his chamber till there came once unawares "a frende of his that called was Pandare," who heard him groan, and, in long dialogue, first won from him the secret that he was in love, then offered to be his helper, none the less able though he had himself fared ill in love. "By his contrarye is every thinge declared." Let Troylus trust his friend, he will not betray his secret:

"Ne by my trouthe, I kepè not restrayne
 The fro thy love, theigh that it were Eleyne,
 That is thi brother wyf, if ich it wiste;
 Be what she be, and love hyre as the liste."

More argument was used to conquer the reserve of Troylus, who said at last,—

"Thanne is my sweetè foo callèd Criseyde;
 And wel neygh with that worde for feere he deyede."

Pandare was glad that Troylus had grace to a lady of such good name and beauty, he who had called Love Saint Idiot, Lord of All Fools; and, reminding him of his nice japes of old, bade him declare to Love his repentance, which he did; and then, as he had also wept many a drop, Pandare bade him hope and be stedfast, counselled him in love, would treat of the matter with his niece, and hoped to please them both hereafter, because they can both keep counsel. As the best preachers are converted sinners, the once mocking Troylus shall be the best prop of the law of love.

"But," asked Troylus, "will Criseyde listen to her uncle?"

"You fear," said Pandare, "that the man will fall out of the moon."

"I desire," said Troylus, "no harm to my lady."

"No lovers do," laughed Pandarus.

Then Troylus laid all in his friend's hand. Pandarus went to consider his work wisely ere he wrought, and Troylus, mounting his bay horse, played the lion in the field, and showed himself in town a gallant knight. "Dede ware his japès and his cruelteè."

In the Second Book of Troylus and Criseyde, Clio is invoked in the Proem, as the Proem to the first book had invoked the "goddesse of torment," Tisiphone. Troylus has escaped the tempest of despair. If,

says the poet, I speak of love unfeelingly, that is no wonder. The blind cannot judge of colours. To the lover my excuse is—

“That of no sentement I this endyte,
But out of Latyn in my tonge it write.”

If any lover, reading here how Troylus came to his lady's grace, think, So would not I buy love; or wonder at his speech or at his doing; let him remember there are many roads to Rome. Each country has its laws, and in this place (that is to say, wherever the poem, according to old custom, is being recited aloud) are scarcely three “that have in love seyde lik and done in alle.”

“Ek some men grave in tree, some in ston walle
As it bitit; but syn I have bigonne,
Myn auctour shal I folwen, if I konne.”

When we discuss his way of following, we shall find a significance in Chaucer's “if I can.” Even here he is about at once to make a considerable variation, for an English reason of his own.

After this Proem, then, we begin the second book with the familiar opening that sings of May and the fresh flowers and birds; and of a man who gets out of bed. It is Pandare who rose in the morning on the third of May, went to his niece's palace and found her sitting with two other ladies in a paved parlour, hearing a maiden read the geste of the Siege of Thebes.

After bright greeting—this part of the book being Chaucer's own and thoroughly dramatic—Pandarus led talk of the last news to praise of Troylus, as a Hector the second; then he affected to depart, but was detained for private counsel that his niece sought of him; which given, he bade Criseyde arise and dance and throw her widow's habit to mischance for the good that had befallen her. Thus, when he had artfully raised her curiosity, he told of the love of Troylus. Pandarus said with tears that he must die too if Criseyde condemned Troylus to death. His love was honest, and it befits women to love before age robs them of their beauty. To preserve lives said to be in jeopardy, Criseyde would constrain her heart against her will, saving her honour, to please Troylus. In after talk Pandare reported to her the love complaints of Troylus. When her uncle was gone, Criseyde withdrew to her chamber, and while she pondered that she was safe, because a man may love a woman till his heart break, “and she nought love ayenn, but if hire liste,” a cry arose without that Troylus had put the Greeks to flight. The household of Criseyde ran to the gates to see him pass along the street, for he could come no other way.

Troylus rode by, like a god of battle, on his wounded horse, in a hewn helmet, and carrying a battered shield. Criseyde blushed and pulled in her head. Was this a man for her to slay?

Chaucer then follows at length the lady's thoughts, somewhat as set forth by his author. After her thinking, Criseyde went down stairs into the garden, where she played with her three nieces, and was followed by a great rout of her other women. She was entertained there with song,

of love that is not to be feared, a Trojan song sung by her niece Antigone. Criseyde then talked a little with her niece, who had so strong faith in the bliss of love that her own dread of it was weakened. They went to bed; and at night Criseyde heard a nightingale singing of love on a green cedar by her chamber wall. She slept, to dream that an eagle clawed her heart out and changed hearts with her.

Troilus, meanwhile, had gone home from battle, and being playfully told by Pandare how he had fared, was counselled how to write, and did write, a love letter, for Pandarus to take to Criseyde in the morning.

Then is told, in playful dialogue, with delicate discrimination of each character, how Pandarus forced the letter upon Criseyde, and, after dinner, cunningly drew her to sit at the window, where he had arranged that Troilus should ride by; the play of character still being represented in a dialogue full of dramatic life; persuading her also to write Troilus an answer to his letter. But in that answer she undertook only to be friendly to him as a sister.

Then Troilus came riding by in gallant array, winning upon her by "his persone, his array, his look, his chere."

The love of Troilus increased that night when he received Criseyde's letter. Pandarus, further to advance the suit of Troilus, finding Deiphobus to be the brother Troilus loved best, went to Deiphobus, told him that wrongful claim was being made to Criseyde's goods, and begged him to be her defender. Would he invite Criseyde to dine with him next day, and get some of his brethren to join him in seeing justice done by her? He would do so, and he would get Helen to send Paris. Hector, who honoured Criseyde, would not fail to come, and Deiphobus would ask Troilus to be of the party. Then Pandare, hurrying to his niece Criseyde, told her that false Poliphete was about to raise new suits against her; but that Deiphobus, Hector, and other lords had been persuaded to oppose him. Pandare then counselled Troilus to go to the house of his brother Deiphobus as a sick man, retire to bed, say that he could not rise, and that his fever was wont to take him at the same time and last till a morrow. Troilus replied that he was sick in earnest, needing no counsel to feign.

The guests next day dined well. They talked of the sickness of Troilus and of remedies:

"But ther sat oon, al liste hire naught to teche,
That thoughtë, best koude I yet ben his leche."

Criseyde heard them praise him. After dinner Pandare opened a great question of the suit of Criseyde, and when the lords were engaged to be her helpers, question arose of Troilus.

They should go to him, Pandarus suggested, in his chamber. But as the room was small and soon heated, few at a time. Criseyde, herself, also might, by a few words, move him to be her defender. Queen Helen and Deiphobus went, therefore, to the bedside of Troilus. When they had spoken, Troilus gave them some letter from Hector, upon which he asked their counsel, and they took it down stairs into an arbour to consult over for the next hour. Then Pandarus went to the great chamber,—

“ And seyde, ‘ God save al this cumpaignye!
 Com, necë myn, my lady quene Eleyne
 Abideth yow, and ek my lordës tweyne.’ ”

She might take with her her niece Antigone, or any one, the less crowd the better. Criseyde, innocent of his intent, said, “ Go we, uncle dear,” and went with him arm in arm, he whispering by the way that it was for her to heal the sufferer.

The Third Book of ‘ Troylus and Criseyde,’ after a Proem on the ruling stars of love, and invocation of Calliope, proceeds to tell how the bedside of Troylus was visited by Criseyde, how he spoke his love,—

“ And Pandare wep as he to water wold
 And puked ever his necë new and newe.”

And by the time Helen and Deiphobus were coming upstairs again Criseyde had kissed Troylus, bidding him be whole, and promised that, her honour safe, she would receive him into her service.

Pandarus lay that night by his friend Troylus, upon a pallet, and reminding him that it was for friendship, not for covetise, that he had become a go-between, urged at length that Troylus should deal by his niece honestly and keep their secret. Troylus reminded his friend how hardly he had told his love even to him. “ How dorst I mo tellen of this matere, that quake now, and no wight may us here?” But he was ready to swear on all the gods in all the temples. And so he proved discreet in all, and a wall of steel to Criseyde :

“ That twenti thousand tymës or she lette
 She thanked God that evere she with hym mette.”

Pandare also went to and fro between them, and at last having persuaded his niece, Criseyde, to sup at his house on a stormy night, assuring her that Troylus would not be of the company, he dissuaded her from returning in the rain, gave up to her his own stewe or small closet, and entering it by a trap door feigned tales and employed wiles that sapped her last stronghold of reserve. Now Troylus, in love as in arms, conquers all.

Towards the close of this book we have Chaucer's recollection of one of the finest passages in Dante,¹ the story of Paolo and Francesca in his version of the lines,—

“ Nessun maggior dolore,
 Che ricordarsi del tempo felice
 Nella miseria.”

Paralleled in his lines—

“ For of Fortune's scharp adversité
 The worstë kynde of Infortùne is this,
 A man to han ben in prosperité,
 And it remembren, when it passèd is.”

¹ ‘ Inferno,’ Canto V., ll. 121-3. The parallel passage in ‘ Troilus and Cressida ’ is B. III., ll. 1576-9.

The Fourth Book, says the Proem, tells how Criseyde turned from Troylus to Diomedes. The invocation, therefore, is of Megæra, Alecto, Tisiphone, and cruel Mars. The Trojans were defeated in a battle with the Greeks. But when there followed truce, and question of exchange of prisoners, Calcas besought the Greeks and had the noble prisoner Antenor given him to offer for his daughter Criseyde. Hector replied that Criseyde was no prisoner, and that the Greeks did not sell women. But the Trojan people clamoured to Priam for their hero Antenor, and it was determined by the Trojan senate to give Criseyde in exchange for him.

Troylus went home from the parliament, lay on his bed pale and wan, raged, wept, and complained of Fortune in his chamber. Pandare, too, left the parliament in rage, and went to woful Troylus, complained with him of Fortune, but sought to comfort him with the suggestion that twelve as fair as Criseyde might be found:

“Forthi be glade, myn owen deerë brother!
If she be lost, we shal recovere another.”

Troylus declared his eternal faithfulness, and called on death. Pandare then asked why Troylus should not seize forcibly the willing Criseyde. “The town,” said Troylus, “had all this war through such seizure of women, and all would blame if I so withstood a grant that had been made for the town’s good.” Besides, he must keep the secret of their love. Pandarus still urged his friend to detain Criseyde.

“Have mercy on thiself for any awe;
Let not this wreched wo thyne hertë gnawe;
But, manly, set the world on six and sevenne,
And if thou deye a martyr, go to Hevene.”

Troylus would adventure only if Criseyde consented.

Criseyde meanwhile heard the ill news from gossip of women, and wept for Troylus, the women thinking that she wept for grief at leaving them. When the gossips were gone, Criseyde went to her chamber, tore her sunny hair, beat her breast, wept and lamented. Pandare, sent by Troylus, found her thus distressed.

“When she hym saugh, she gan for sorwe anon
Hire tery face atwine hire armës hyde.”¹

And, through much sharp lamenting, her uncle arranged with her that Troylus should come that night to plan some way either to disturb her going or to make her come again soon after she was gone.

¹ To this point in Troylus and Criseyde, as in the few citations from the Assembly of Foules, I have quoted Chaucer from a text carefully and truly taken from the best MSS. of each poem. Mr. Richard Morris’s valuable edition of the text of Chaucer will probably have been published when this volume sees the light, and the whole advantage will thus be within reach of all students which I now enjoy, only in part, through the courtesy of the editor and publisher, who have obliged me with the use of its unpublished sheets as far as they are printed.

Then Pandare found Troylus in a temple, weeping afresh and distracting himself about Free Will and Necessity; more than a hundred lines of reasoning out of Bradwardine's '*De Causâ Dei*,'¹ being now put, in an hour of passionate emotion, in the mouth of Troylus. After it, with "then said he thus," follow the four lines of lament really proper to the occasion, upon which follows the consolation of Pandarus and his counsel of the meeting between Troylus and Criseyde, which is next described.

Through the passion of the meeting Criseyde became as dead. Then Troylus, when he had laid her out, drew his sword to slay himself and die with his lady. But she awoke from her swoon with a sigh after he had bidden farewell to the world. If she had not awakened then, he would have killed himself, and she, finding him dead, would have died, she said, by the same sword. And now they blended dalliance of love with counsel, in which Criseyde showed to Troylus sundry devices, with beguilement of her father through his avarice, by which she could surely return to Troy within ten days.

And so she meant; and Troylus, although his heart misgave him at her going, trusted her. But he should kill himself, he said, if on the set day she did not come back to Troy. Her father was crafty. Many a lusty knight among the Greeks might please Criseyde, or her plans might fail. Why should they not steal away together before morning, taking treasure "enough to live in honour and pleasaunce" until they die? Troylus had kin elsewhere who would see that they lacked nothing, though they came in their bare shirt. But Criseyde would not lead her lover into causeless suffering by such unthrifty ways. Attesting her fidelity with a great solemn oath, and invoking direst penalties on faithlessness, she argued against open disgrace that must come of their flight together. On the tenth day from her leaving, Troylus should surely see her again. Troylus held to his own mind, but yielded to Criseyde, who told him that 'twas for his "moral virtue" she had loved him, with a love that length of years might not foredo. So when the day rose they parted ruefully.

The Fifth Book, opening without a Proem, says in the first stanza that the time had come when the angry Parcæ were to fulfil the destiny that Jove had in his disposition. Diomedes was ready, in the early morning, to lead Criseyde to the army of the Greeks. Troylus, hiding his grief, was on his horse at the gate by which Criseyde should pass out, and wrathful at the sight of Diomedes. With hawk on hand, he, at the head of a huge rout of knights, followed Criseyde as far as they might "to do her company." Antenor, coming out of the Greek host, was joyfully

¹ '*De Causâ Dei contra Pelagium*,' Lib. III., cap. 1., and its corollary, "quod aliqualis necessitas et libertas, ac meritum casusque et fortuna invicem non repugnant; de fati quoque præscientiæ, prædestinationis et gratiæ cum libero arbitrio ac merito concordia generali." Chaucer's stanzas beginning

"For if there sit a man on yonder see (seat)"

popularize Aristotle's argument, '*Socratem sedere dum sedet*,' cited by Bradwardine in the reasoning on this corollary.

received, and Troylus parted from Criseyde with the secret reminder, "Now hold your day and do me not to die," and, with pale face, turned his courser about saying no word to Diomedes.

Diomedes guessed their love, and as he rode with Criseyde to the tent of Calcas, offered himself to do all her bidding as a brother, and spoke of love to her as one who had never before loved woman. Criseyde, as she alighted from her horse, said she would trust him; and then receiving welcome from her father,

"She said eke, she was fain with him to mete :
And stodë forth muet, milde, and mansuete."

Troylus, when he reached home, in frenzied sorrow cursed everything but his lady. That night he had ill dreams, and lamented alone. Pandarus, being with Priam, could not come to him till morning. In the morning Troylus began to make arrangements for his funeral, and sending of his heart in a gold urn to Criseyde. Pandarus said that he complained too much about a fortnight's absence. Ten days are not so long to wait, and as for dreams no man knows what they mean; for the auguries of ravens and screech-owls,

"Alas, alas, that so noble a creature
As is a man, should dredë such ordùre."

There was truce, said Pandarus, and holiday in Troy. Let them beguile the time with King Sarpedon, who was not a mile from town. Sarpedon was a king who held liberal festival. They went; but feasting, music, and fair ladies could not gladden Troylus. He read a hundred times the letters Criseyde had sent to him, he recalled her image. On the fourth day he would go back to Troy, but Pandarus said they had promised Sarpedon to stay with him a week. At the end of the week they returned, and next day, Troylus, having made excuse to see the palace of Criseyde, lamented at the sight of its barred doors. Then he rode up and down; every place reminding him of Criseyde. Another day or two he spent in imagining how he had wasted and how men spoke of his melancholy. He made a song of few words, and he told his sorrow to the moon. He walked on the walls and looked at the tents of the Greek host, whence the sweet air blew from his lady. A growing wind blew only from the direction of the camp. That, he said, "is of my ladie's deepë sighes sore." So Troylus lived till the ninth night was passed.

On the other side was Criseyde, with few women, among the Greeks, grieving that Troylus would think her false because she could not bring her father again into Troy, and dared not steal away alone at night. Yet steal away she would. But within two months

"She was full ferre fro that ententioun.
For bothë Troilus and Troie town
Shall knotlessë throughout her hertë slide.
For she woll take a purpose to abide."

Diomedes sought to bring Criseyde's heart into his net. He was ready

and courageous, stern of voice, mighty and square of limb. Criseyde was of middle height, used to wear her clear tresses at her back bound by a thread of gold, had Paradise in her eyes, and no fault in her rich beauty save that her brows joined together; "but truely I can not tell her age." Troylus was well grown, young, fresh, strong, and hardy as a lion, true as steel.

On the tenth day from Criseyde's leaving Troy, Diomedes came to the tent of Calcas, feigning business with him, and sat by Criseyde, while the spices and the wine were brought out for him. They talked of the siege, and Diomedes asked why Criseyde's father delayed wedding her to some fit man. She had been sad since she came among the Greeks. If for love of a Trojan, it was not worth while; for no Trojan was worth the spilling of a quarter of a tear. No Trojan would survive the vengeance of the Greeks. She would find more perfect love in Greeks. And Diomedes himself would rather serve her than be lord of twelve Greeces. He said that with a little quaking in his speech; declared his name and kindred formally, and asked to speak with her upon the morrow. Criseyde assented, but he must not speak of love; though, if she had ruth of any Greek, it would be of himself. Diomedes pressed his suit and took her glove.

On the morrow came to her again "this suddaine Diomedes" and conquered her pain, so that she gave him the fair bay steed she had won of Troylus, and a brooch that had been Troylus's, and she made him wear a little pennon of her sleeve. But never woman made more woe than she over her falsehood. She lamented that her name in truth of love was gone for evermore.

On the tenth day after Criseyde's leaving Troy, Troylus and Pandarus were on the walls till noon to look for her coming back. At noon Pandarus took his friend away to dinner. After dinner they were on the wall again. Evening came, and yet Criseyde did not come to Troylus. He commended her wisdom. She meant to come unobserved. She would ride in by night. Pandarus assented, but laughed to himself softly, at this looking for last year's snow. The warden called all in and shut the town gates for the night. Then Troylus rode home; but gladdened himself in the thought that he had miscounted the day. Upon the morrow he went up and down upon the walls, but all for nought; and on the third, fourth, fifth, and sixth day after the ten.

Then jealousy crept in to him. He forsook meat, and drink, and company. And on a day he dreamt that as he walked, weeping, in a forest, he saw his lady folding in her arms and kissing a great tusked boar that slept in the sun. He awoke and cried to Pandarus that his Criseyde was false. But the boar, Pandarus said, might signify her father who was old and like to die, and she for sorrow kissing him as he lay on the ground. He counselled Troylus to write to Criseyde.

Troylus sat down and did so. Whereupon the poet rhymes, in nearly a hundred lines, "the copie of the Letter," which begins "Right fresh flour," and is signed "Le vostre T." Criseyde, whose answer is described in ten lines, said that she would come as soon as she might, and amend all that was amiss; but wist not when; and swore she loved him best.

"But Troylus thou mayst now east and west
 Pipe in an ivie leafe if that thee lest :
 Thus goth the world ; God shild us fro mischaunce,
 And every wight that meaneth trouth avaunce."

Troylus went to bed, where "he ne eat, dronkë, ne slept, ne wordë seide." But he always remembered his dream of the boar, and sent for his sister Cassandra to interpret it.

Cassandra told him at length the tale of Meleager's boar hunt, of the descendants of Meleager, Tydeus, Eteocles, and Polynices, Diomedes ; and that the boar of the dream betokened Diomedes, who had his lady's heart.

Troylus angrily refused to believe, but after Cassandra was gone leapt from his bed, and day by day sought evidence. Fortune was against Troy. Hector presently was killed in fight, and Troylus, next him in worthiness, was chief in grief for him. But still, while he began to despair of Criseyde, his heart found excuses for her tarrying. He wrote to her often, and received from her a letter, which the poet rhymes, wherein she faintly professes love, and says that come she will, but cannot name a year or day. The reason of her tarrying she cannot tell, lest her letter should be found, but it is "all for wicked tongues." He may assure himself of her as his friend for life. She cannot write much where she is, and never was a good letter writer. He must not take it ill that what she writes is short,—

"Th' entent is all and nat the letters space,
 And fareth well, God have you in his grace,

LA VOSTRE C."

Troylus felt hereby—

"that she
 Was nat so kind as that her ought to be."

One day, as custom was, coat armour torn from an enemy was borne in triumph before Deiphobus. It was armour of Diomedes. As Troylus was observing its length and breadth, and workmanship, he saw within its collar the brooch that he had given to Criseyde, and that she had pledged her faith to keep for ever.

Then Troylus went home, sent for Pandare, cried after death, and bewailed his lady's faithlessness, when yet he could not find within his heart to unloven her a quarter of a day.

Thenceforth he desired to meet this Diomedes, and he would seek his death in arms. The Greeks suffered for his ire. Always he sought Diomedes, and often they met "with bloody strokës and with wordës great." But fortune willed not that one should die of other's hand.

Chaucer bids them read Dares who would know the deeds of Troylus, and beseeches ladies that they be not wroth with him for Criseyde's guilt:—

"Go, little booke, go little Tregedie ;
 There God my Maker yet ere that I die
 So send me might to make some Comedie.
 But little booke, makë thou none envie,
 But subject ben unto all poesie,

And kisse the steps whereas thou seest pace
 Of Vergil, Ovid, Homer, Lucan, and Stace.
 And for there is so great diversetè
 In English, and in writing of our tong,
 So pray I God, that none miswritè thee
 Ne thee misse metre, for defaut of tong :
 And redde whereso thou be, or elës song,
 That thou be understood, God I beseech.—
 But yet to purpose of my rather speech.”

That is to say, let me go back to what I was telling. The Greeks bought dearly the wrath of Troilus. He slew thousands of them before he was himself slain by Achilles. And his spirit went up to the seventh heaven, whence he looked down on the world and despised its vanities. Seeing the spot where he was slain, he laughed in himself at the woe for his death :

“And dampned all our werkes that folweth so
 The blindè lust, whichè that may nat last,
 And shulden all our herte on Heaven cast.”

“Such finè hath, lo, Troilus for love!” Young, fresh folks, he or she, look Godward, and think this world but a fair. Love Him who bought our souls upon the cross, and whose love never will be false to you. Such stories as this the old clerks tell of the world's wretched appetites and of the fine and guerdon for travail in service of the heathen Gods :

“O morall Gower this booke I direct
 To thee and to the philosophicall Strode,
 To vouchsafe therè need is to correct,
 Of your benignities and zeeles good.”

And the book ends with a prayer that Christ may make us worthy of His mercy.

This profoundly earnest close to the book is, with every touch of purity of thought contained in it, Chaucer's own, and is the final setting of the English seal to our own version of the Italian poem. Chaucer interpolated also, before the stanza telling of the death of Troilus at the hand of Achilles, his “Go little book,” his reverence for the great poets of antiquity, and his own hope that he might live to write a comedy, that is, a poem ending cheerfully; in fact, such as the framework of the ‘Canterbury Tales;’ and that through the diversity in English and in writing of our tongue,—diversity conspicuous when we compare the English of these early poems of his with the contemporary ‘Vision of Piers Plowman,’—he might not be miswritten or have his metre spoilt by bad pronunciation.

How Chaucer
 Englishes
 Boccaccio.

Then he tells of the death of Troilus, which he has reserved for the purpose of attaching his own English moral to the tale of fleshly passion and the sand on which it builds. Boccaccio draws no moral from his story but that (also of one of the most modern Italian songs, 'La donna e mobile') woman is changeable; and he adds a dedication of it to his Fiammetta, from whom he expects faith. Chaucer follows the soul of Troilus to heaven, and shows it looking down upon the transitory passions of the flesh; then, turning from the paynim Greeks and Trojans to the Christian creed, tells of the love unchangeable that is the Christian's stay, while dedicating his book to his two earnest friends and brother poets, John Gower and Ralph Strode.

The Testament and Complaint of Creseyde, added by Robert Henryson, while they attest the popularity of this repertory of love music according to the fleshly sense of love, show that the moral read by Chaucer in the story really gave the light by which Englishmen read it.

The original of Chaucer's Troilus and Cressida is 'Il Filostrato,' a poem in ten books, written in 1347-8, when its author, ^{Boccaccio's} Boccaccio, was thirty-four years old. ^{'Filostrato.'} We shall understand Chaucer the better if we compare his work with its original. At seven years old Boccaccio had made verses, but his father meant that he should thrive by trade, and after learning little Latin and much arithmetic, he was placed under a trader with whom he lived six years and travelled much. His master said that he was of small capacity, because he was not apt for the business he was then learning. He was set, therefore, to study canon law, that being a very lucrative profession, and spent nearly another six years in proving himself to be unsuited for that. But the new studies had enabled him to master Latin. As he would not make a lawyer, young Boccaccio's father put him back into trade, and sent him to Naples, where King Robert held court in a spirit that would have tempted men less apt than Boccaccio to a career of letters. At the court of King Robert he heard Petrarch discourse of poetry before his crowning with the laurel wreath. Boccaccio sang praises also of the lady whom he called Fiammetta, a beautiful Maria of the house of Aquino, in whom King Robert supposed that he had a nearer interest than her reputed father.

There was strong liking then in Italy for romances, part in prose and part in verse, that, like the strings of sonnets made after an older fashion, fancifully represented love in all its moods. One of the current tales was that of Flore and Blanche fleur, subject of a French metrical romance of the beginning of the thirteenth century. This Boccaccio, at the suggestion of Fiammetta, told in his 'Filocopo,' in fourteenth-century Italian prose, prolix with invocation, love discourse and episode. But the 'Filocopo' was followed, in Boccaccio's twenty-eighth year, by his 'Teseide,' telling the tale of Palamon and Arcite. It was, in modern literature, the first story of human interest told metrically, without allegory, in an epic form. This laid the foundation of modern epic romance. The 'Teseide' Boccaccio humbly dedicated to Fiammetta.

After writing it, he was recalled to Florence by his old father, whose other sons were dead, excepting one. At Florence he saw the rise of Walter Duke of Athens, whom King Robert of Naples had sent as a military leader. In September, 1342, Duke Walter was made prince for a year, the mob shouting their amendment of the term, as not for a year only, but "for life." Within a year he was expelled for tyranny. Strife followed between the nobility and people. The story of this, Boccaccio himself told afterwards among his tragedies of illustrious unfortunates; but his writing at the time of these events was only in the literary fashion of the day. He wrote the 'Amorosa Fiammetta,' and, on an idea from Theocritus, his pastoral 'Admetus, or Comedy of the Nymphs of Florence,' in prose mixed with verse. The nymphs are five virtues, that successively found their way to the heart of Admetus and made of the rough hunter a gentleman. From this poem came, for some time, in direct descent, the line of modern pastoral romance.

His old father's marriage, in 1344, enabled Boccaccio to return to Naples when King Robert was dead, and there reigned in his place his granddaughter Queen Giovanna, and the husband Andrea whom she detested. That Andrea was called one night from his bed and strangled. Two years later the depraved queen married her cousin, instigator of the murder to which she had consented. Meanwhile the murder produced anarchy. This

infamous Queen Giovanna cherished men of letters. She sought of Boccaccio licentious tales, and obtained his praises as the glory, not only of women, but of sovereigns. She revived in force all literary love fashions. Justice was dead in Naples, but the queen's authority was upheld in the Courts of Love.

At the court over which Maria Fiammetta presided, there was argument one day of a lover, which he had best have if he might have one only of three wishes:—sometimes to see his lady; sometimes to discourse of her; or to think softly of her within himself.¹ Each side had advocates. Boccaccio argued that the lover's chief pleasure would be in thinking of his mistress. But when, presently, Fiammetta left Naples while he was obliged to stay, he questioned the truth of his judgment, and produced a poem in her absence—this story of Troilus and Cressida—his second epic romance, with the appended letter which grieves at her parting.

Thus the original of Chaucer's Troilus and Cressida was written by Boccaccio, a man of thirty-four or five, when the English poet was about twenty years old. The original, written at the court of a lascivious and fascinating murderess, and produced to please the taste of a corrupt society, was but a livelier, and, in many passages, less modest form of the conventional court poetry that rang the changes upon love. Now let us see, through alterations that he made, in what spirit the right-hearted Chaucer Englished it.

In the first place, Chaucer's version is more than half as long again as its original. 'Troilus and Criseyde' contains 2899 lines more than the 5352 of 'Il Filostrato.' The varied invocations at the opening of Chaucer's first three books, and the invocation preceding the fourth book, which is common to the fourth and fifth, are not in Boccaccio's poem. Boccaccio invokes, at the outset of the poem, Fiammetta, who is his Jove and Apollo, and whose absence caused him to write of deserted Troilus. A few details will show Chaucer's manner of enlargement. Boccaccio begins the story in the seventh and eighth stanzas of the

¹ Argomento dell' Autore, prefixed to the 'Filostrato.' Other notes given above are from the 'Vita di Giovanni Boccacci, dal Conte Gio. Batista Baldelli.' Firenze, 1806.

first part of the 'Filostrato,' which are expanded into three stanzas of 'Troilus and Criseyde.' Two stanzas are then translated closely; then a stanza is again expanded into two; five stanzas are then translated stanza for stanza, after which three stanzas are expanded into six. Then the translation is very direct, stanza for stanza, until Chaucer digresses to the comparison, which is his own, of the prince who disdains love with proud Bayard, first in the trace, who skips on the way until the whip reminds him that he must pull with his fellows. This stanza is interpolated, and so are the following stanzas of reflection upon love. Presently there is another incidental interpolation of what Troilus had said to lovers. The next interpolation is the sonnet of Petrarch's, translated as 'the Song of Troilus,' in three stanzas. But we return to Boccaccio, at the stanza beginning, "And to the God of Love, thus sayed he." Eighteen stanzas are then closely translated, except that the Complaint of Troilus is in five stanzas instead of seven. Here ends the first part of 'Il Filostrato;' the first stanza of the second part being that in which Pandarus first appears. From this stanza Chaucer has struck out the description of Pandarus as a brave young Trojan of high lineage. He brings him to Troilus as simply "a friend of his." His question, to which Boccaccio gives two lines, Chaucer expands into ten, with seven more of comments. He is to be Cressida's garrulous uncle, humorous, lacrymose, tricky, worldly wise, according to the wisdom of the base; the sentimental comradeship with Troilus being an oddity which we may refer, if we please, to the fact that Troilus was a king's son, who might have any form of parasite. The next nine stanzas of dialogue are closely translated. Chaucer then interpolates the five stanzas beginning, "A whetstone is no carving instrument." The next two stanzas represent one stanza of Boccaccio's, then a stanza is translated pretty closely, and then five stanzas more are added by Chaucer to the argument of Pandarus. The next six stanzas of Boccaccio (xv.-xxii.) are expanded by Chaucer into the twenty-two, beginning "Yet Troilus, for all this, no word said," the narrative being overlaid by the garrulity of Pandarus. In Boccaccio, Griseida is represented as the cousin of Pandarus; Chaucer makes her his niece, and ascribes to him craft of age instead of the fresh valour of

youth. Even when he translates closely, he gives to the dialogue a more colloquial character, although he burdens it with disquisitions, and impedes the progress of a narrative that in the verse of Boccaccio runs with a light, even, graceful step, from the first stanza to the last.

Outwardly graceful, inwardly graceless. In the next stanzas Boccaccio represents, what English Chaucer would not represent, Pandarus as a noble youth, offering help in winning his cousin's assent to dishonest love. Chaucer is not content with having taken the generosity of youth and manly dignity out of the character of Pandarus: he also modifies the character of his first offer to help Troilus. Three stanzas of Boccaccio (Bk. II. st. xxi.-xxiii.) are expanded into four, in order to secure a cleansing of the third of them. Chaucer then interpolates the nine stanzas beginning, "But well is me," before he comes to the stanzas in which Pandarus proceeds with an argument concerning honour in women, better adapted to the court of Queen Giovanna of Naples than to the homes in which English women had read to them Chaucer's 'Troilus and Criseyde.' Five stanzas are here translated with omission, alteration, and interpolation. The rest of Chaucer's first book, "When Troilus heard," &c., expands and modifies five stanzas of Boccaccio (Bk. II. st. xxix.-xxxiii.), in which Pandarus laughs at modest professions made by Troilus, and Troilus embraces him as a wise friend who knows how to end his grief.

Chaucer closes his first book in the middle of the second book of 'Filostrato,' and opening his own second book with an added invocation to Clio, comes altogether in his own way to the visit of Pandarus to Cressida. Boccaccio simply makes him go to her, look hard in her face, and begin offhand to call on her to forget the dead to whom her love was pledged, and think of the love Troilus has for her. The conversation ends, according to Boccaccio, with Cressida's being moved by a picture of the love torment of Troilus to yield her love to him. Chaucer makes this part of the story, by a great deal, more dramatic as well as more honest and natural. The first thirty-two stanzas of the second book are Chaucer's own. The scene of the wily uncle's morning call upon his niece, where he

“found two other ladies set and shee
 Within a paved parlour, and they three
 Herden a maiden hem reden the geste
 Of the seige of Thebes, while hem leste.”

The light familiar colloquy through which Pandarus makes subtle approach to his subject, the uncle's art for awakening curiosity, and the shrewd, half-comic suggestions of his worldly cunning, are all Chaucer's own, and there is nothing equal to them to be found in 'Il Filostrato.' Chaucer's opening of the second book of 'Troilus and Criseyde' is, indeed, evidence that, if he really wrote it in the earlier part of his life, at the time when he was bending to the fashion of the time, and writing or translating poems in the conventional way of the court, Chaucer was already a wise humourist, with a keen sense of character, and much of the original power that at last had full expression in the Prologues to the 'Canterbury Tales.'

It is only in Chaucer's thirty-third stanza of the second book that Pandarus looks on Cressida "busie wise;" and we have translations again, though not close, from Boccaccio. The version is then very free till we come to the description of the grief of Troilus, "Tho (then) Pandarus a little gan to smile." Here there are several stanzas very closely followed, but there is change and amplification, and Chaucer does not represent Cressida as conquered by the description. After the departure of Pandarus, Boccaccio at once represents Cressida in love debate with herself. Chaucer prepares for this by bringing the martial figure of Troilus outside her window as he comes through the street, with broken helm and battered shield, from putting the Greeks to rout. He makes that picture of bright manliness suggestive, but even yet refuses to show Cressida as wholly won.

“For I say not that she so sodainly
 Yafe him her love, but that she gan encline
 To liken him tho, and I have told you why:
 And after that, his manhode and his pine
 Madë that love within her gan to mine.”

Boccaccio made her yield at the mere hearing of "his pine." Chaucer adds the sight of him in his manhood "next his brother, holder up of Troy," before he tells somewhat of the thoughts of

Cressida "as mine auctour listeth to endite." He strikes out "mine auctour's" representation of her dwelling on the beauties of Troilus, her own beauty, the fleeting of youth, the honour of secrecy. He strikes out her licentious doctrine that it is no sin to do as others do; her objection to a husband, her sense of the wisdom of preserving liberty and of the sweetness of stolen waters. What the English poet substitutes for all this is a sense of honour and a dread of the untruth of men. Cressida's going down into the garden and hearing from Antigone the Trojan song of love, with the song itself, the coming on of night, the singing of the nightingale upon the cedar-tree, and Cressida's dream, are all added by Chaucer to the poem. The letter of Troilus to Cressida, written at the suggestion of Pandarus, is condensed, after the previous counselling of Pandarus had been amplified, and touches of humour added to the dialogue,—every change being on the side of wholesomeness.

Chaucer's dealing with the next incidents is equally remarkable. Boccaccio's Cressida receives the letter of Troilus as a gallant of the court of Joan of Naples would desire a lady of the same court to receive it;¹ and her letter in reply broadly suggests that assurance of secrecy is all her honour needs. Chaucer invents a garden dialogue, in which he adds more touches to his character of Pandarus, sets Pandarus and his niece to dine together, and by suggestions of delicate humour gives an honest picture of the slow yielding of Cressida's mind to the suit pressed on her. Again also he supplements bare imagination with a picture of Troilus riding by; this time not as a battered hero, but as a knight in all his bravery. Instead of translating the long letter of lust disguised as half refusal, Chaucer describes it in five lines, thus:

"She thonkèd him, of all that he well ment
Towardès her, but holden him in bond
She n'olde not, ne make her selven bond
In love, but as his suster him to please
She wold ay faine to don his herte on ease."

And it was with modest womanly reserves that Cressida gave

¹ "Così fossi io nelle sue dolce braccia
E stretta petto a petto, e faccia a faccia,"

closes her strain of thought upon the subject.

the letter to the go-between. After its delivery, according to Boccaccio, Pandarus again talked to his cousin, obtaining an assignation with her for Troilus by simple assurance of his secrecy. And in the next book, the fourth of Boccaccio's ten, Cressida simply rises at night after all are gone to bed, to meet Troilus with open arms in a dark, solitary place, and be with him till cockcrow. After this there is nothing in the Italian poem but a continued dwelling on illicit passion, till we come presently to the claim of Calchas for the delivery of Cressida, which incident occurs at the opening of Boccaccio's fifth book. What, then, is Chaucer's story of the wiles of Pandarus, with detail of the trick of the threatened lawsuit, of the dinner at the house of Deiphobus, the feigned sickness of Troilus, the interview with him in his chamber, and the final treachery of Pandarus on occasion of the supper at his own house and the storm? These are dramatic incidents which the English poet has invented, to the end that he may substitute as long as he can for the base Italian ideal, a picture, suited to his own and the best English mind, of woman's grace and innocence.

But that is not all, or nearly all. When at last animal passion has its triumph, Chaucer draws upon his author for a picture of such bliss as it can give; and, as he continues to translate, still modifying, humanizing, and enriching with dramatic touches, blending suggestions of womanly delicacy that yet lingers about the fallen Cressida, he proceeds with that which is for him and for his readers part of the stern moral of the story, Cressida's loss of honesty towards her lover also. In so doing he strengthens the grace of fidelity in Troilus, to whose character he had added many a touch of manliness. For these he had no warrant in his "author Lolius," who makes Troilus fall as struck by lightning when he hears that the demand for Cressida is granted by the Trojan Senate. And, after all, he sums up with a lesson on the perishableness of earthly passion, as he points heavenward to the love that is unchanging. Religious earnestness, honour to the pure beauty of womanhood, English humour and dramatic vigour, Chaucer adds to the 'Filostrato;' but in so doing, it must be granted, as a set-off to the charm of his dramatic alteration and enrichment of the character of Pandarus, wherever it touches his remodelled

Cressida, that by enlargement of the dialogues between Pandarus and Troilus, equally well meant, but less interesting to himself and us, he destroys the swiftness and grace with which the original poem, immoral though it be, runs in one strain of accordant music from the opening until the close.

Chaucer's additions to the story of Cressida in the Greek camp, and her dialogue with Diomedes and with her father, indicate his reading in the first romance which contained the tale of Troilus and Cressida, the *Geste de Troie* of Benoît de Sainte-Maure, or the Latin prose version of it by Guido Colonna. But throughout the poem the essential changes are of his own making, and directly illustrative of those qualities which we have found thus far, and shall find to the end, characteristic of the people whose best mind is expressed in the literature whereof some part of the story is here being told.

There can be no doubt whatever, from the way of Englishing Italian words, and the obvious relation of *Troilus and Cressida* to the '*Filostrato*,' in many parts line for line and stanza for stanza, that Chaucer made the English out of the Italian poem. The '*Latine*' to which he referred was that of the modern, not the ancient people of a country that in its vernacular still meant by "*latino*," language, idiom, speech, and talked even of the birds singing "*ciascuno in suo latino*." He can only mean Boccaccio when he says *Lolius*. The notion of a lost Latinist, and of what Mr. Godwin called an "*era of Lolius*," becomes superfluous and even absurd after any real comparison between the English and Italian poems. But why does Chaucer give the name of *Lolius* to Boccaccio? The same comparison between the Italian and English poems has shown us with what eyes Chaucer looked as an English moralist on the Italian whose genius attracted him. The spirit of '*Il Filostrato*' was, whatever its charm, wickedly licentious. Morally it was but the gospel according to the court of Queen Giovanna. The genius of the Italian poet was here spent in sowing tares; and, with a parable of Scripture in his mind, out of *Lolium*, the Latin for a tare, Chaucer contrived for him, probably, a name that he thought justly significant.¹

¹ We think only of tares or cockles as choking the good seed, but according to the old notions of botany they were a corrupted form of the good seed

In the 'House of Fame' Chaucer sustains a lofty flight of original thought with playful homeliness of speech. Throughout his verse there is the true poet's disinclination to think upon stilts. Chaucer's English is that of the cultivated townsman, containing a larger admixture of words added to the language since the Norman Conquest than was to be found in the still very Saxon English of the provinces: in the Vision of Piers Plowman, for example, sung by a true poet and most earnest religious satirist who dreamed on the slopes of Malvern Hills. But there is in each poet a like strength of unaffected power. Chaucer's mind had a wider range of perception and expression than that of any of his contemporaries and of the greater number of his after-comers, but in his grace and tenderness and in his strongest flights of fancy or feeling as in broadest mirth the natural man speaks with his own unforced humour. There is no muffling of power in thick wrappers of a farfetched phraseology; strength that lies

itself, and the metaphor had all the more significance. "*Herba in segetibus nascens usque inimica, hordeo similis, cujus etiam vitium esse putatur, quasi δόλιον, hoc est adulterinum. Fit enim e corruptis tritici ac hordei seminibus,*" is the definition of the word Lolium in Forcellini's Lexicon, answering to the old view of darnel, and to Chaucer's opinion of Neapolitan love poetry. The change from neuter into masculine was necessary to turn Lolium into a man's name. The word is spelt in the MSS. sometimes Lolius and sometimes Lollius. In the 'Promptorium Parvulorum' (edited by Mr. Albert Way for the Camden Society), an English-Latin Dictionary of about the year 1440, the Latin for "cokylle, wede," is given as not Lolium but Lollium. The doubling of the second *l* leaves, therefore, the interpretation of the name quite unaffected. Much eighteenth-century writing upon our early literature that is hardly yet felt to be obsolete is made critically valueless by the French conventional point of view from which it reasons upon English thought. The influence of the French school of criticism was not extinct among us even in 1803, when William Godwin produced his rambling 'Life of Chaucer' with its pinch of seed pearl in a pack of wool. In discussing Troilus and Cressida, and adopting that French-born critical notion of the "low" which had been laughed at by Fielding and Goldsmith, Godwin objects to Chaucer's introduction of such homely phrases as "For him demeth men hot that sethe him swete," and observes, "Few instances can be given in which the Italian writer has degenerated into anything mean and vulgar." For such critics Chaucer might have saved himself his labour towards the elevation of the 'Filostrato' so that it might look out upon God's larger world over the palings of the sensual sty. Give them their own notion of a sonorous way of eating hog-wash, and they will find more in it than in heavenward aspiration that breathes through the ordinary speech of men.

in the thought itself wears no misfitted clothing of an artificial eloquence. The beauty and dignity of human thought moves freely in all its naked grace. The days were yet to come when it was thought necessary either, as at a later time of the Italian influence, to present it in a doublet of fine phrases fantastically slashed and bedizened with bright jewels of conceit, or, as in the days of French critical rule over English thought, never to let it be seen with its head clear of a rhetorical periwig, now full flowing, now succinct and trim.

As far as regards use of words, good writing excels good speaking, because it is compelled, by a more exact fitting of the words themselves to the thought spoken and to the energy with which it is conceived, to atone for the absence of those personal aids of eye, voice, gesture, which enforce the word of mouth. But the strength comes of making written language more not less true to the natural mind of the writer. It does not come at all of keeping a closet in one's mind for best-company words and phrases, only to be set out in impressive array on state occasions. Good written English is the home language of Englishmen intensified by the care taken to make it perfectly expressive. It should be coloured more not less than spoken English with that which the hearer of the spoken language also sees in trick of eye and hears in tone of voice ; temper, that is, and humour of the mind which seeks to utter itself truly. All that lives in the tones and modulations of the natural voice and brightens the aspect of the speaker who is interested in his subject, the writer also, be he poet, historian, philosopher, or anything more than hurdy-gurdy, must endeavour not to keep out of his writing in the name of a dignity that is but conventional and insincere, but to keep in it, in the name of truth, which is first of the dignities of God. The true writer's question to himself is never, "Am I like all the other people who look fine?" But it is, "Am I like myself when truest to a duty?" "If I have matter to sing, or to record or reason out, is it," he asks of himself when he desires to test his work, "my own whole and exact thought that I utter, with the variations in degree of force that belong really to my own perception of the parts of it, and with the simplicity essential to that plain and full expression which begets the readiest and truest sympathy of understanding in the minds of others?"

Such doctrine may pass unquestioned in this second half of the nineteenth century, but is in several respects the opposite of that preached by the critics fifty or a hundred years ago. The simple directness of speech that makes Chaucer himself seem always to be walking by his reader's side, we recognize now as a sign of power. His fancy travels a far road, for example, in his poem of 'The House of Fame;' and, in the days when periwigs were worn, readers who went to a book with their heads preoccupied by critical rules of propriety, only half saw how true to English nature was the light strain veiling depth of thought, the homely saying or good-humoured air of jest nerving the strenuous labour of an upward climb, and making the appreciation of all great thoughts that proceed out of it only the more ready and genuine. I say this in apt connexion with one work of Chaucer's, but it was true of his work from the first, and now, as his independent strength asserts itself more and more clearly, becomes truer and truer.

'The House of Fame' is in three books.

The First Book, after reflections upon dreams, tells of a dream in which the poet thought himself in a temple of glass with golden images and with portraits of Venus, Cupid, and Vulcan, for the temple was of Venus. Here in written pictures he saw the story of Æneas and of Dido, which—

"Whoso to know it hath purpose
Rede Virgile in Eneidos,
Or the Pistels of Ovide."

Chaucer himself, in this book of 'The House of Fame,' follows in brief Virgil's story from the "*Arma virumque cano*" with which he also sets out—

"I woll now sing, if that I can,
The armës, and also the man,
That first came through his destinie
Fugitive from Troy the countrie,
Into Itaile, with full much pine,
Unto the strondës of Lavine."

The English measure is the short octosyllabic rhyme of the 'Roman de la Rose,' well accordant with the poet's humour, which is apt to break a homely proverb over Dido, and is not less apt

to show its perception of the sublimer strain of Dante, whose 'Inferno' is remembered in the telling of Æneas's descent to hell,—whereof the torments must be read

"In Vergile or in Claudian,
Or Dante, that it tellen can ;"

and whom at the close of this book he paraphrases or almost translates. Having seen in the glass temple the story of Æneas, the dreamer went out of doors to look for any who could tell him where he is. Outside was but a wide and empty wilderness of sand. Then he prayed to be saved from phantom or illusion, and as he looked upward in his prayer, near the sun

"Methought I saw an eagle sore,
But that it seemed much more
Than I had any egle yseen ;
This is as sooth as death certain,
It was of gold and shone so bright."

Which eagle has flown into Chaucer's poem out of the ninth Canto of Dante's 'Purgatory.'¹

In the Second Book of 'The House of Fame,' Chaucer, like Dante, is carried up by the eagle, whose swoop is described from Dante's suggestion.² But Chaucer is bent on a playful earnestness of satire. From the brittle Temple of Venus that stands in a wilderness of sand—that allegory should not escape attention—he was being carried upward to see what the House of Fame is like, and on the way he established travelling acquaintance with the eagle, who declared himself the poet's friend although he was a noyous thing to carry. Was Jove going to stellify him, wondered the poet. The eagle said to him—

"Thou demest of thy selfe amis,
For Jove is not thereabout,
I dare thee put full out of doubt,
To make of thee yet a sterre."

¹ "In sogno mi pareva veder sospesa
Un aquila nel ciel con penne d'oro,
Con l' ali aperte, ed a calare intesa."

'Purgatorio.' Canto IX., ll. 19-21.

² "But never was that dent of thunder," &c.

Chaucer.

"Terribil come folgor discendesse,
E mi rapisse suso infino all foco."

Dante.

He was being carried up from the Temple of Venus to look at the House of Fame because he had served love well,—

“And painest thee to praise his art
Although thou haddest never part,”

and because he was a very quiet student. Chaucer's exclusion of himself personally from the conventional garden of love, though in the poems written for John of Gaunt it may be ascribed to courtly delicacy, becomes in a passage like this so direct that, considering how often the assertion is repeated, we may perhaps be justified in reading it as an unaffected little reservation indicating now and then his own sense of true manliness in practical acceptance of the doctrine of that 'Remedie of Love' said to have been written by him in his youth, and his early recognition of Alcestis, the pure wife, as true queen of 'the Court of Love.' A few lines lower down, a fragment of the eagle's easy talk to Chaucer is evidently reflected from the poet's actual life. "You hear little about your neighbours," says the eagle to him,—

“For when thy labour all done is,
And hast made all thy reckonings,”—

that is, when you have gone home from your day's work as Comptroller of the Customs and Subsidy of Wools, Skins, and Tanned Hides, in the Port of London (office obtained at the age of fifty),—

“Thou goest home to thine house anone,
And also dombe as a stone
Thou sittest at another booke,
Till fully dased is thy looke
And livest thus as an hermite,
Although thine abstinence is lite.”

The number of Chaucer's works and the extent of grave study indicated in many parts of them justifies this picture of the poet going home in his later years from his office to an evening with book and pen; while the added confession that, though a hermit in study he has no relish for hermit's fare, assures us that he is not telling his own mind from imagination only.

So the poet was taken up to the Temple of Fame, the place between heaven, earth, and sea, where all rumours meet, each

falling to it naturally as a stone falls to the earth or as smoke rises in the air. The eagle whimsically demonstrates to "Gef-fray" in plain words the philosophy of this, and says of his discourse,—

" 'Perdë it ought thee to like,
For hard language, and hard matere
Is incombrous for to here
At onës, wost thou not well this ?'
And I answered and said 'Yis.'
'Ah, ah,' quod he, 'lo, so I can,
Leudly unto a leud man
Speke, and shew him such skilles [reason],
That he may shake hem by the billes
So palpable they shoulde be.'"

The Second Book of 'The House of Fame' is entirely occupied with the telling of the poet's journey in the eagle's claws. Here there is mention of the eyrish beasts "of which speaketh Dan Plato." Chaucer glances also at Watling-street, the Milky Way, and exclaims, "O God much is thy might and noblesse," when beholding the—

"Cloudes, mistes and tempests,
Snowes, hayles, raynes, and winds."

He remembers how Boethius had spoken of the flight a thought might take upon the feathers of philosophy; this eagle flight to the House of Fame being like the poet's voyage in the little boat of thought,

"With such rome
As all were lodged in a towne,"

as told in Chaucer's dream of the Princess of the Island and her maiden commonwealth. Up in the House of Fame every word takes the shadowy likeness of its speaker, and—

In the Third Book, which describes the house, Chaucer begins with a reminiscence of the invocation at the opening of Dante's 'Paradise':

"God of Science and of Light,
Apollo, through thy gretë might
* * * * *
And if devinë vertue thou
Wilt helpë me
* * * * *

Thou shalt see me go as blive
 Unto the next laurèr I see
 And kisse it, for it is thy tree."¹

But Chaucer modestly abstains from following Dante in the suggestion that he will crown himself with a few leaves of Apollo's laurel.

As Dante referred to the dignity of his subject, Chaucer in asking inspiration referred also in his gayer strain to his desire to put thought rather than craft into his light unlearned rhyme.

So, then, we come to the fine allegorical description of the House of Fame which is a bright imagination of the English poet's own, although his mind may probably have been directed to it by reading the *Trionfi* of Petrarch. One can see well enough how the machinery of the dream in Petrarch's *Triumph of Love* and the details of his *Triumph of Fame* may have set Chaucer thinking in the direction of his House of Fame. But the invention is his own, the details are his own, and the lively description of the House is one of the brightest creations of his fancy. There is a grand suggestiveness, a true elevation of thought, in the plain words that conjure up images, clearly defined and brightly coloured, which do not rise only to melt in air and be no more. They pass into the reader's inner house of thought, and live there. More than three centuries after Chaucer's body had been laid in dust, they lived in the heart of a young poet of three-and-twenty, for whom the Temple of Fame had strong attraction, and Pope "not void of hopes" sang to his own age, in its own and his own different way, this song of Chaucer's.

¹ "O buono Apollo, all' ultimo lavoro
 Fammi del tuo valor

* * * *

O divina virtù, se mi ti presti
 Tanto, che

* * * *

Venir vedràmi al tuo diletto legno,
 E coronarmi allor di quelle foglie,
 Che la materia e tu mi farai degno."

Dante. 'Del Paradiso,' Canto I., ll. 13-27.

The House of Fame stands on a rock of ice,

“ written full of names
Of folke that had afore great fames.”

Many were melted or melting away, but the graving of the names of the men of old fame was as fresh as if just written :

“ But well I wistë what it made,
It was conservèd with the shade.”

The castle of beryl, full of windows, had minstrels and gestours in all its pinnacles. There were Orpheus, Arion, and other great harpers,

“ And small harpers with hir glees,
Sat under hem in divers sees [seats],
And gone on hem upward to gape,
And counterfeited hem as an ape,
Or as craft counterfeiteth kind [nature].”

There, with many more who are described, were—

“ The pursevauntës and heraudes
That crien richë folkës laudes,”

The arms on their coats,—

“ Men might make of hem a bible
Twenty foote thicke as I trowe.”

The temple was plated half a foot thick with the best of gold ; of which, says the poet, “ too lite all in my pouche is.” In the Hall of Fame sate, on a carbuncle, the goddess herself, changing in form so that from being but a cubit's length she rose till her head touched heaven. Her feet were winged, and she was many eyed, and many eared, and many tongued, and on her shoulder she displayed the arms of Alexander and Hercules. The Muses were there, who sang eternally the song of Fame. Upon metal pillars, in the Hall of Fame, there stood Josephus, who bore up the fame of Jewry ; Statius, who bore up the name of Thebes upon his shoulders ; and, wondrous high upon a pillar of iron, Homer with Dares and Titus (Dictys) ;

“ and eke he Lollius,
And Guido eke the Colempnis,
And English Galfride eke ywis,
And each of these, as I have joy,
Was busië to beare up Troy.”

Boccaccio here re-appears, by virtue of his tale of Troy in

Troilus and Cressida. Guido de Colonna was the translator of Dares into Latin. English Galfride, Geoffrey of Monmouth, connected the story of Troy with that of England by his chronicle of Brutus, grandson of Ascanius, the son of the Trojan Æneas, whom Diana sent with his Trojans to found a new Troy in our Albion, and whom Geoffrey made progenitor of a long line of British kings. That genealogy made Englishmen seem to be natural partisans of Troy, so that Homer might be suspected among them, as Chaucer says he was, of

“Feyning in his poetries,
And was to the Grekës favorable.”

On other pillars of the Hall of Fame were Virgil, Ovid, Lucan.

There blows an air from Dante through much of this book.

Though there is no direct copying of any incident or phrase, the recollection seems not indistinct in such a passage as that naming

The Tholasan that hightë Stace
That bare of Thebës up the name
Upon his shoulders, and the fame
Also of cruel Achilles.”¹

Then there were divers companies that knelt before the Queen for boons. Nine successive companies by their petitions represented so many distinct classes of men,—

“And some of hem she granted sone,
And some she warned wel and faire,
And some she granted the contraire
Of hir asking utterly.”

Some, who asked fame for their good works, were denied good or bad fame. Others who had deserved well were trumpeted not by that clarion of Eolus “cleped cleare laude,” but by his trump “that is ycleped sclander light.” Others obtained their due reward. Some, who had done well, desired their good works to be hidden, and had their asking. Others made like

¹ “Tanto for dolce mio vocale spirto,
Che Tolosano a se mi trasse Roma,
Dove mertai le tempie ornar di mirto.
Stazio la gente ancor di là mi noma :
Cantai di Tebe, e poi del grande Achille.”

‘Del Purgatorio.’ Canto XXI., ll. 88-92.

request but had their deeds trumpeted through the clarion of gold. Some, who had done nothing, asked and had fame of deeds only to be done by labour; others who had asked like favour were jested at through the black clarion. Wicked men came, asking for good renown, and had it. Others who did evil and sought good reward of Fame were denounced by Æolus through the black trumpet.

Then the poet was taken to the house of Dædalus, the labyrinth, with as many chinks and holes and open doors as there are leaves on a tree. This was the House of Rumour, shaped like a cage, sixty miles long; an unsubstantial house of twigs, yet built to last.

His friend, the eagle, slipped the poet in at a window of this whirling house. When he was in, it seemed to stand firm, and to be so full that there was not a foot breadth of space:

“ And every wight that I saw there
Rowned everich in others eere,
A new tiding prively,
Or els he told it all openly
Right thus, and said, ‘ N’ost nat thou
That is betidde, lo, right now?’
‘ No,’ quod he, ‘ tell me what?’
And then he told him this and that,
And swore therto that it was soth,
Thus hath he said,—and thus he doth,—
And this shal be,—and thus herde I say,—
That shal be found, that dare I lay.”

Opposing rumours—“ a leasing and a sadde sooth saw ”—jostled one another as they sought to fly out by one hole and agreed to flyto gether. Every rumour flew first straight to Fame, who gave it name and duration. The House of Rumour was full of reports and lies shaped as shipmen and pilgrims, pardoners, runners, and messengers. In a corner of the hall where men told of love-tidings there was a great noise:

“ And I gan thitherward behold
For I saw renning every wight,
As fast as that they hadden might,
And everich cride, ‘ What thing is that?’
And some said, ‘ I n’ot never what,’
And when they were all on a hepe,
Tho’ behinde gone up lepe.

And clambers up on other faste,
 And up the noise or highen caste,
 And treden fast on others heles,
 And stampe as men done after eles.

At the last I saw a man
 Which that I nought ne can,
 But he seemed for to be
 A man of great auctorite."

The noise in the dream awoke the poet, who remembered how high and far he had been in the spirit, and bent himself to his work again :

"Wherefore to study and rede alway
 I purpose to do day by day."

When asked to make his petition to the Goddess, Chaucer had disclaimed, on his own part, desire of fame, saying,—

"Suffiseth me, as I were deed,
 That no wight have my name in hond.
 I wot myself best how I stonde,
 For what I drie [suffer] or what I thinke
 I wol my selfe al it drinke,
 Certaine for the more part
 As ferforth as I can mine art."

But he had fame in his lifetime, and might have seen himself mirrored in the man who seemed to be of great authority, about whom the noisy crowd pressed in the corner where love-tales were told. As saith of him Venus, in the eighth book of the 'Confessio Amantis,'—

"in the flourës of his youth,
 In sondrie wise, as he wel couth
 Of ditees and of songes glade,
 The which he for my sake made,
 The londe fulfilled is over all."

Of those early songs and ditties very many must be lost, but we know now how honestly the poet used the great authority such writing had obtained for him. 'The House of Fame,' whereof he warned his reader that he might "take it in earnest or in game," was written at a time when he was certainly past fifty, and could speak of himself as old. The eagle, as he carried him up, asked in the course of conversation,—

"Wilt thou lerne of sterres ought?"
 'Nay certainly,' quod I, 'right nought.'
 'And why?' quod he. 'For I am old.'"

But in 'The Legend of Good Women' Chaucer enumerates 'The House of Fame' among the works he had then written, placing it first, as probably his latest poem, fresh in mind. Several allusions also to the allegory of the Flower and the Leaf, show that subject to have been prominent in Chaucer's mind at the time when he wrote the Introduction to 'The Legend of Good Women.' The poem, therefore, of ^{The Legend of Good Women.} 'The Flower and the Leaf' was written probably at about the same time of his life. I have already said that in 'The Legend of Good Women' Chaucer includes among his works then written the adaptation of the tale of Palamon and Arcite from Boccaccio's 'Teseide,' which he made the Knight tell to the Canterbury Pilgrims. Another of the Canterbury Tales is in the same list, the 'Lyfe of Seynte Cecile,' which became the second Nun's tale. The nine classical stories in 'The Legend of Good Women' were written, probably, at different times in Chaucer's later life, and his reference to this work of his in the Prologue to the 'Man of Lawes' tale, where he calls it 'The Saint's Legends of Cupid,' includes a citation of more stories than it now contains, besides explicitly describing it as "his large volume:"

"Who-so wole his largë volume seeke,
 Cleped the Seintes Legendes of Cupide;
 Ther may he see the largë woundës wyde
 Of Lucesse, and of Babiloun Tysbee;
 The sorwe of Dido for the fals Enee;
 The tree of Philles for hir Demophon;
 The pleynt of Dyane and of Ermyon,
 Of Adrian, and of Ysyphilee;
 The barreyn ylë stondyng in the see;
 The dreynt Leandere for his fayre Erro;
 The teeres of Eleyn, and eek the woo
 Of Bryxseydë, and of Ledomia;
 The cruelté of the Queen Medea,
 The litel children hangyng by the hals,
 For thilke Jasón, that was of love so fals.
 O Ypermistre, Penollope, and Alceste,
 Youre wyfhood he comendeth with the beste.¹

Against the prevalent poetical contempt of marriage Chaucer has, from his youth up, maintained the honour of wifhood.

¹ 'Canterbury Tales,' vv. 4480-4496.

Not content with all that he had done to give womanly delicacy to the character of Criseyde in the earlier part of her story, and to draw the noblest moral from her fall, he feels even yet that the beauty of pure womanhood is clouded by her story. This 'Legend of Good Women' is written, therefore, with the avowed purpose of satisfying by his writings his own sense of what is good and just.

But the suggestion even of this series of poems Chaucer derived from Boccaccio, whose collection of one hundred and five stories of Illustrious Women, told briefly and pleasantly in Latin prose, includes nearly all of those whom Chaucer celebrates; a remarkable omission being that ideal wife, Alcestis, long since enshrined by Chaucer in his poetry as Queen of Love. Boccaccio dedicated his collection to a good Neapolitan wife, the Countess of Altavilla, telling her that his first thought had been to inscribe it to "that singular glory not only of women but of sovereigns, queen Giovanna;"¹ but he says glory such as hers would have extinguished the light of so small a spark as his little book, for which reason he dedicates it to the countess, whom he tells that she is conspicuous for modesty and so well-provided by nature with compensations for the weakness of her sex that she is as good as a man.

Chaucer fastens in a way of his own on the theme suggested to him by this book. He opens with the thought that there is joy in heaven, pain in hell, and saying of himself that "on bokes for to rede I me delyte," and that he is not easily drawn from them,—

"Save, certeynly, whan that the monethe of May
Is comen, and that I here the foules synge,
And that the floures gynnen for to sprynge,
Farwel my boke, and my devocion."

And then of all the flowers, it is above all the Daisy that he loves,—

"So glad am I, whan that I have presence
Of it, to doon it allë reverence,

¹ "Enquirenti digniorem ante alias, venit in mentem Italicum jubar illud præfulgidum, ac singularis non tantum fœminarum, sed regum gloria, Johanna serenissima Hierusalem et Siciliæ regina."—*Boccaccio*, 'De Claris Mulieribus,' ed. Berne, 1539.

As she that is of allë flourës flour,
 Fulfillèd of al vertue and honòur,
 And evere ylike faire, and fressh of hewe,
 And I love it, and ever ylike newe,
 And ever shal, til that myn hertë dye."

Ditties in praise of the Marguerite, or daisy, were, as we have seen, popular with the French fashionable poets; but none of them, like Chaucer, among all their allegorical dream-ings ever dreamed of celebrating in that flower an emblem of womanly truth and purity, wearing its crown as a gentle, innocent, devoted wife. In 'The Court of Love' he painted over with daisies, as her flower, the castle of Alcestis. He feigned, without warrant of mythology, that Alcestis had been transformed into a daisy. And now, when he prepares to tell his 'Legend of Good Women,' he opens with emphatic praises of their emblem flower that seem to pass into an endearing thought of his own wife when, of the daisy whom he serves, he sings:

Chaucer's
Daisy.

"My worde, my werkes, ys knyht so in youre bonde
 That as an harpe obeieth to the honde,
 That maketh it soun after his flyngerynge,
 Ryght so mowe ye oute of myne herte bringe
 Swich vois, ryght as yow lyst, to laughe or pleyne;
 Be ye my gide and lady soveregne.
 As to myn erthely God, to you I calle,
 Bothe in this werke, and in my sorwes alle."

As he sought his daisy,

"And as I koudë, this fresh flour I grette
 Knelyng alwey, til it unclosèd was
 Upon the smalë, softë, swotë gras
 That was with flourës swote embrouded al,"—

he heard (here varying his allegory in the praise of woman's innocence) the birds who had escaped the net of the fowler,

"that for his covetyse
 Had hem betrayèd with his sophistrye.
 This was hire songe, 'The fowler we deffye,
 And al his crafte.' And sommë singen clere
 Layës of love, that joye it was to here,
 In worshipping and preysing of hire make [mate]."

The pure-hearted poet, who sings, "But I ne clepe nat Inno-

cence folye," feigns that he had his couch made near the daisy on fresh turfs,—

"For deyntee of the newë sommeres sake."

And in his dream there came to him

"The God of Love, and in his hande a quene,
And she was clad in real [regal] habite grene.
A fret of golde she haddë next her heer
And upon that a white coroune she beer,
With flourouns smale."

This is the personified daisy, in whose praise the poet sings, "Hyde, Absolom, thy giltë tresses clere:" a balade to the refrain, "My lady cometh, that all this may disteyne." There followed the Queen nineteen ladies in royal habit, "the ladies good ninetene," who are said in the Court of Love to have obeyed the King and Queen, Admetus and Alcestis. These all, when they saw the daisy, kneeled

"And songen with o vois. 'Heel and honour
To trouthe of womanhede, and to this flour
That bereth our alder pris in figurynge,
Hire white coroune beryth the witnessynge.'"

The Queen in her white crown of innocence sat by the God of Love who, espying Chaucer, blamed him as one who should not come so near to his own flower. He had translated the 'Romant of the Rose,' which is heresy against Love's law:

"And of Cresyde thou hast seyde as the lyst,
That maketh men to wommen lassë trist,
That ben as trewe as ever was any stele."

The good Queen pleaded for the poet. He might have been falsely accused:

"Envie is lavendere of the court alway;
For she ne parteth neither nyght ne day,
Out of the house of Cæsar, as saith Daunte."¹

He had served as he could:

"La meretrice, che mai dall' ospizio
Di Cesare non torse gli occhi putti
Morte commune e delle corto vizio
Inflammò contra me gli animi tutti."

Dante. 'Inferno,' Canto XIII., ll. 64-7.

"He made the boke that hight the House of Fame,
 And eke the Deeth of Blaunchë the Duchesse,
 And the Parlement of Foulës, as I gesse,
 And al the Love of Palamon and Arcite
 Of Thebës, thogh the storye is knowen lyte ;
 And many an ympnë for your haly dayes,
 That highten Balades, Roundels, Virelayes,
 And for to speke of other holynesse,
 He hath in prosë translated Boece,
 And made the Lyfe also of Seynte Cecile.
 He made also, goon ys a gretë while,
 Origenës upon the Maudeleyne."

Alcestis, therefore, asks grace for the poet, and promises for him that he shall swear,

"He shal never more agilten in this wyse,
 But shal maken [poetize] as ye wol devise
 Of wommen trewe in lovyng all hire lyf,
 Wherso ye wol, of mayden or of wyf,
 And forthren yow as muche as he mysseyde,
 Or in the Rose, or ellës in Criseyde."

The God of Love yielded at once to the gentle counsels of Alcestis, ever charitable and true. The poet urged for himself then, that a true lover ought not to blame him if he spoke a false lover some shame,

"Algate, God woot, yt was myn entente,
 To forthren trouthe in love, and yt cheryce,
 And to ben war fro falsnesse and fro vice
 By swiche ensample ; this was my menyng."

Alcestis tells him Love must not be argued with ; and now, year by year, as he lives, let him spend the most part of his time

"In makyng of a glorious legende,
 Of goodë wymmen, maydenës and wyves,
 That weren trewe in lovyng all hire lyves ;
 And telle of falsë men that hem bytraien,
 That al her lyfe ne do nat but assayen
 How many women they may doon a shame.
 For in your worlde that is now holde a game.
 And thogh thee lykë nat a love be,
 Speke wel of love ; this penance yeve I thee.

* * * * *

And when this boke ys made, yeve it the quene
 On my behalfe, at Eltham or at Shene."

This is the passage showing that the poem could not have been

written before Richard the Second's first marriage, with Anne of Bohemia in 1382, when Chaucer's age was fifty-four.

The poet afterwards speaks with Love of the good Alcestis, of whom Love says that

"kalender ys she
To any woman that wol lover be,
For she taught al the crafte of fyn lovyng,
And namely of wyfhode the lyvyng,
And alle the boundës that she oughtë kepe."

And now let him find in his books the legends of those other ladies "sitting here arow," the nineteen who are in his ballad and will be found also in his books :

"Have hem in thy Legende now alle in mynde :
I mene of hem that ben in thy knowyng.
For here ben twenty thousande moo sittyng
Thannë thou knowest, goodë wommen alle,
And trewe of love for ought that may byfalle."

The stories that now remain attached to Chaucer's introduction are,—of Cleopatra,

"For lat see now what man that lover be
Wol doon so stronge a peyne for love as she ;"

Thisbe, the story of Pyramus and Thisbe from Ovid's 'Metamorphoses,'¹ "Naso saith thus," writes Chaucer; Dido, "I koude folwe worde for worde Virgile," says Chaucer here, "But it wolde lasten al to longe while," and he draws also upon Ovid's 'Heroides,'²

"Who so wool al this letter have in mynde
Rede Ovyde, and in him he shall hit fynde ;"

Hypsipyle and Medea, from Ovid's 'Metamorphoses,' and Heroides;³ the story of Lucretia, "as saythe Ovyd and Titus Lyvyus,"⁴ of whom he quotes also Augustine's great compassion.⁵

The stories also of Ariadne and of Philomela from Ovid's 'Metamorphoses';⁶ and lastly, of Phillis and of Hypermnestra, from Ovid's 'Heroides.'⁷ They are all, except the tales of

¹ IV. 55-166.

² Ep. VII.

³ Met. VII. Her. Ep. VI.

⁴ Ovid, 'Fasti,' II. 741. Livy, 'Hist.' I. 57.

⁵ "Si adultera, cur laudata? Si pudica, cur occisa?" 'De Civ. Dei,' cap. xix.

⁶ Bk. VIII. v. 152, and Bk. VI. 412-676.

⁷ Ep. II., and Ep. XIV.

Ariadne and of Phillis, in Boccaccio 'De Claris Mulieribus,'¹ but Chaucer in his poems follows the original authorities and sometimes translates them rather closely.

'The Flower and the Leaf' represented two of the badges, numerous in mediæval heraldry, which distinguished individuals or families. They were usually in some ^{The Flower and the Leaf.} way significant, or were made to appear so. In the fourteenth or fifteenth centuries such badges were much cared for and habitually used in decoration of costumes, trappings, furniture, and so forth. Of flowers the rose was Queen, and that emblem or badge the Plantagenets both of York and Lancaster carried at this time without distinction of colour. At the treaty of Amiens, in 1392, the Duke of Lancaster wore a robe adorned on the left sleeve with twenty-two roses made of rubies, sapphires, and pearls, and a collar ornamented in like manner.² But he had a badge also peculiar to himself, two falcons holding fetterlocks in their beaks. In 1394 Froissart decorated with ornaments of roses a richly bound copy of his poems presented to Richard II. Afterwards, as we know, the house of Lancaster adopted the red rose and that of York the white. A flower—the rose—is the badge of England; a leaf, the shamrock, is the badge of Ireland. Strawberry leaves, laurel, hazel, oak leaves, have been used as badges; and besides the recognition by Deschamps of a discussion among French ladies of the relative significance of leaves and flowers, we have allusions by Chaucer in 'The Legend of Good Women,' and by Gower in the 'Confessio Amantis,' to the Flower and Leaf argument among the current talk of love in chivalry.

Of Chaucer's Poem of 'The Flower and the Leaf,' M. Sandras has pointed out that there were two pieces on this subject written by Eustache Deschamps, nephew and pupil of Machault.³ They

¹ 'De Claris Mulieribus,' ed. cit. Cleopatra, cap. 86. Thisbe, cap. 12. Dido, cap. 40. Hypsipile and Medæa, capp. 15, 16. Lucretia, cap. 46. Hypermnestra, cap. 13.

² Tarbé in note to Deschamp's poem. 'Œuvres des Deschamps,' vol. ii., p. 80.

³ But, as his verse indicates, a man of more substantial earnestness. He was an ugly fellow who sang of himself as "Roy de laidure," but had a bright well-shapen mind that used its genius in seeking liberty and justice for

are short pieces, simply giving reasons in a few stanzas for assigning to the flower superiority over the leaf as having fairer colour, scent, and promise of fruit. One of these pieces¹ was written in 1387 for the marriage of John of Gaunt's daughter, Philippa, to King John I. of Portugal. Philippa was John of Gaunt's daughter by his first wife Blanche, and it was at Guienne after unsuccessful effort to make good his claims by force that John, Duke of Lancaster, arranged her marriage with John, King of Portugal. It was some months later that John of Gaunt's daughter Catherine, by Constance his second wife, was married to the heir apparent of Castile.²

M. Sandras suggests that Chaucer wrote his English poem of 'The Flower and the Leaf' upon the same occasion, for his patron's daughter, and perhaps at her request. Its tenor agrees very well with that opinion of its origin. Chaucer does not speak in his own person. The poet of 'The Flower and the Leaf' is represented as a lady who pays homage to the worth that wears the laurel.

It was in December, 1386, that Chaucer was deprived of his offices in the Customs by the Reform party opposed to John of Gaunt and all Court favourites. Between December, 1386, and July, 1389, when home politics changed their face, and John of Gaunt went back to England, Chaucer was at first deep in plots of the Court party, riding hither and thither in their service. In 1388 he was locked up for his pains, incurring some risk of the gallows or life-long imprisonment, as we shall find from his 'Testament of Love;' and when safe out of that peril, still he was in adversity. Considering how he was employed, it is

his country. Both a courtier and a free citizen, he flattered neither king nor people, wrote war songs against England, and took for motto a line from a ballad of Machault's to his son: "Fay ce que dois et aviènge que puet."

¹ 'Œuvres des Deschamps,' Reims, 1849, Tom. I., pp. 86-8. Deschamps speaks of the topic as a familiar one, beginning—

"Pour ce que j'ay oy parler en France
De deux ordres en l'amoureuse loy
Que dames ont chascune en différence,
L'une feuille et l'autre fleure."

The last stanza declares his flower to be Philippa of Lancaster.

² See p. 161.

almost inevitable that during the plottings in that first year of his adversity he should have been sent as the man of most influence with John of Gaunt to that absent prop of the King's party, who was then in Guienne. Thus it is quite possible that while, as a man of action, he was deep in conferences with her father on home politics, he should have paid his tribute of verse on the occasion of Philippa's marriage.

Chaucer's poem of

The Flower and the Leaf

has the conventional opening in the season of sweet showers when the poet—narrating in the person a lady—lay sleepless in bed, though none,

"As I suppose, nadde more heartes ease
Than I, for I nadde sicknesse nor disease."

Healthy in body and mind—the healthy bride elect Philippa being, perhaps, signified—she rose, sleepless, at three in the morning, about the springing of the day, dressed, went to a pleasant grove and listened for the nightingale. A narrow path in the grove led to a pleasant arbour benched with new turfs and thickly walled with green. Without was a rich field. Within a sweet air came from the eglantine, and to the side of the arbour joined a medlar-tree full of blossom, in which a goldfinch leapt prettily from bough to bough, eating the buds and flowers at his pleasure. The song of the goldfinch was answered by a nightingale who sat in a fresh green laurel-tree. Then, as the Lady of the poem sat in the arbour listening to the birds, a world of fair ladies, in rich attire of white velvet seamed with jewels, came out of a grove hard by. They wore chaplets, some of laurel, some of woodbine, some of agnus-castus.¹ Some singing and dancing soberly, all followed one who went alone, surpassing the rest, and carrying a branch of agnus-castus in her hand. She began a French roundel, "Under the leaf to me," which all answered with sweet voices. And thus they came dancing and singing into the midst of the mead before the arbour. These ladies, as we afterwards learn, are all servants of the Leaf-following Diana, goddess of Chastity. Those wearing chaplets of the agnus-castus are pure maids, those who

¹ Vitex agnus-castus, or Tree of Chastity, is a shrub of the verbenaceae family. It grows five or ten feet high in marshy plains and is like willow. Its dried leaves are powerfully aromatic, and in Pliny's 'Natural History' we are told of the virtue ascribed to them that gave the plant its name. "Græci lygon vocant, alii agnon: quoniam matronæ thesmophoriis Atheniensium castitatem custodientes, his foliis cubitus sibi sternunt," Plin. 'Nat. Hist.,' Lib. xxiv., cap. 9. A similar virtue was ascribed to the similar leaves of the willow, as Pliny had told a sentence or two earlier, "Folia contrita et pota intemperantiam libidinis coercent, atque in totum auferunt usum sæpius sumpta." This is the origin of the willow's place in our old love-songs.

wear laurel are hardy and victorious, those in chaplets of woodbine are steadfast to love in word, and thought, and deed.

Then there came out of the wood a rout of brilliant knights. First came the esquires and kings of arms, in white, with green chaplets on their heads; then the Nine Worthies, the twelve Peers of the Round Table and other knights, also in white velvet, wearing chaplets of green laurel. These jousted on the plain, danced with the ladies, and withdrew under the thick shade of a great laurel, bowing to the tree, singing and marching round it, every lady with a knight.

Now came into the plain a lusty company of knights and ladies in green, crowned with flowers and dancing to the music of minstrels. They advanced to a tuft overspread with flowers, and inclined to it with humble reverence. Presently one of the ladies sang praise of the Daisy, and all answered her together.

But about noon the sun withered the beauty of the flowers, and these knights and ladies were oppressed with heat. Then came a storm of wind scattering the flowers, and a storm of hail and rain, so that the knights and ladies had not a dry thread on them.

Those in white who were under the laurel felt nothing of the great affray, but they went in pity to comfort those in green, and the Queen in white took kindly by the hand and greeted the Queen of the other company. That other queen is Flora, and they who wait on her are such as have loved Idleness.

The company that had been sheltered by the laurel took hospitable care of the rest, dried their clothes, made balmy ointment of herbs for their blistered skin, and gathered pleasant salads to refresh them from the heat. The Lady of the Leaf then bade the Lady of the Flower to sup with her. The nightingale that had been singing in the laurel flew on the hand of the Lady of the Leaf. The goldfinch had fled from the medlar-tree into the cool bushes, and now folded his wings on the hand of the Lady of the Flower. So the companies rode on, and as they passed the arbour the poet questioned one of the ladies of the company in white. When all she had seen had been interpreted to her,

“ ‘Now faire Madame,’ quod I,
 ‘If I durst aske what is the cause and why
 That knightës havë the signe of honour,
 Wel rather by the Leafe than by the Flour?’
 ‘Soothly, doughter,’ quod she, ‘this is the trouth :—
 For knightës ever shoulde be persévering,
 To seeke honoür without feintise or slouth,
 Fro wele to better in all manner thing ;
 In signe of which with leavës aye lasting
 They be rewarded after hire degre.’ ”¹

When all is understood, the lady from whom the poem is supposed to come is asked :

¹ I quote ‘The Flower and the Leaf,’ as well as the next poem of ‘The Cuckoo and the Nightingale,’ from Mr. Richard Morris’s text in the proof sheets with which he has kindly favoured me.

“ ‘But to whom do ye owe
 Your service? and which wolle ye honoure,
 Tel me I pray, this yere, the Leafe or the Floure?’
 ‘Madame,’ quod I, ‘though I be least worthy,
 Unto the Leafe I owe mine observaunce.”

The Lady in white tells her that she has well chosen, and rides on. The lady of the arbour goes home to write what she has seen, and wonder at the boldness of her little book that is so unconning,

“Sith that thou wost full lite who shall beholde
 Thy rude language, ful boistously unfolde.”

Though there is no direct evidence there is all probability that this English poem was furnished by Chaucer to John of Gaunt's eldest daughter, and given by her to her husband John of Portugal, in return for his gift to her—a Rose of Lancaster—of the French poem of Machault on the same theme, which identified her by name with the beauty and hope of the Flowers. In marrying John of Portugal, a man of thirty, natural son of Pedro the Cruel, Philippa really did pay homage to a wearer of the laurel, for he had been raised to the throne three years before this wedding in spite of the more legitimate claims of his sister Beatrice, the King of Castile's wife, and had been doing battle for his throne, which he secured at last by beating his opponents at the battle of Alinbarota. He owed his wife, too, to the winning of that battle. He was a soldier king, who got himself the name of John the Great, and when near sixty years old went to victory over the Moors in Africa. The close of ‘The Flower and the Leaf’ might well, therefore, have been contrived to represent the bride Philippa's compliment of homage to this bridegroom's character.

To these later years also belongs Chaucer's poem of ‘The Cuckoo and the Nightingale.’ Inclination towards The Cuckoo and the Nightingale. fables and poems about animals had been strong for many generations. Master Nicholas, of Guildford, had sung of the contest overheard by him between the Owl and Nightingale about two hundred years before Chaucer sang of what he also had overheard between the Nightingale and Cuckoo. But two hundred years before Chaucer the birds were rude, each bragged of himself and made contemptuous attacks upon the other. The only question was, which is the better bird? Now, in the contest between Nightingale and Cuckoo, the Cuckoo indeed is

a bird of bad manners, but he does not affront the Nightingale with personalities. He is rude because he flouts at Love, which is the subject of discussion. The poem is based on a popular superstition that they will be happy in love during the year who hear the Nightingale before the Cuckoo. If they hear the Cuckoo first it is the worse for them.

And so 'The Boke of Cupide,' God of Love, or

The Cuckoo and the Nightingale

begins with celebration of the power of the God of Love, though, the poet says, he is old,

"I speke al this of felyng truley ;
For although I be olde and unlusty,
Yet have I felte of that sekenes in May."

As he did when he lay wakeful on the night he tells about, night of the third of May, and thought how among lovers

"hit was a comune tale
That hit wer good to here the nyghtyngale,
Rather [earlier] then the leude cukkow synge."

So he rose and went into the wood to listen for a nightingale. He found a fair land of green grass powdered with daisy. There he sat down to delight in the song of the birds and the accordant music of a running river :

"And for delyte, I ne wote never how
I fel in such a slombre and a swowe,—
Nat al on slepe, ne fully al wakyng,—
And in that swowe me thoght I herdë singe
That sory birdde the lewedë cukkowe."

These lines are a complete stanza and will serve to show, in passing, the peculiar metre formed by adding a fifth line to rhyme with the former of two rhymed heroic couplets. It would be all in rhymed heroic couplets did not these interpolated fifth lines break them into light musical stanzas.

The poet had little joy of the Cuckoo's foul voice, and was chiding the bird when, in the next bushes, a Nightingale began lustily to sing. He told the good Nightingale that her song had come a little too late, for he had heard the Cuckoo before her. But then he found that in his trance he knew what the birds said.

"And then herd I the nyghtyngalë seye,
'Now, goodë Cukkow, go sommewhere thy weye,
And let us that synge dwellen here.'"

The Cuckoo thought himself a truer and a plainer speaker than the Nightingale. Who, he would like to know, was to tell what the Nightingale meant by "ocy, ocy" (the note of the nightingale according to

the French popular poems). The Nightingale explained that ocy meant her wish that enemies of love and loveless men were dead. The Cuckoo was for no such doctrine as "that eyther shal I love or elles be slawe." With his declaration hereon of contempt for lovers, the argument began. The Nightingale maintained the worth of love in Chaucer's healthy strain, "For thereof truly cometh al 'goodnesse," &c. The Cuckoo was so stubbornly of another mind that the Nightingale at last broke out into weeping. Whereupon the poet, starting up, got a stone out of the brook,

"And at the cukkow hertely I caste
And he for drede gan fly away ful faste
And glad was I when that he was igon,
And evermore the cukkow as he fley,
He seyde, Farewel, farewel papyngay!
As thogh he had iscorned, as thoght me;
But ay I hunted him from tre to tre,
Tille he was fer al out of syght away."

The grateful Nightingale promised to be the poet's singer all that May. To ease his wo the poet was to look on the fresh daisy every day, "and looke alwey that thou be good and trewe."

The Nightingale then flew to the other birds of the dale to tell of the unkindness of the Cuckoo. It was agreed by them that there must be a parliament of birds, and Cuckoo summoned to appear before it.

"And this shal be, withouten any nay,
The morowë, seynte Valentynë's day,
Under the maple that is feire and grene
Before the chambre window of the Quene,
At Wodëstok upon the grenë lay."

To the poem is appended a balade with the refrain, "For of al goode she is the beste lyvyng;" which was probably its dedication to the queen, for whose pleasure, if we may infer so much from the closing suggestion of a twitter of birds under her window, the poem was written.

Chaucer's 'Testament of Love' uses the word Testament in the old scriptural sense, of a witnessing, and means ^{The Testa-}by Love the Divine Love, the Christian spirit en-^{ment of Love.}couraging and directing the wish for grace of God, called Margaret, the pearl beyond all price. This interpretation of the book is explicitly given at the close, and is throughout manifest. Indeed, it will bear no other construction. It was written during the season of the poet's adversity; and, I have no doubt, for reasons presently to be shown, was either begun in prison or written directly after release from imprisonment in the earlier part of the year 1388.

As the heathen philosopher Boethius when in adversity wrote in his prison three books of the 'Consolations of Philosophy,' so it occurred to the Christian poet in his day of trouble that he would write three books, after the manner of Boethius, with the difference that he derives his consolation from religion, and that it is not Philosophy but Divine Love that comes to speak with him.

In the Prologue to the 'Testament of Love,' Chaucer begins with upholding the use by Englishmen of their natural tongue for the communication of their thoughts. "Lette than clerkes enditen in Latin, for they have the propertie of science, and the knowinge in that facultie: and lette Frenchemen in their Frenche also enditen their queinte termes, for it is kyndely to their mouthes, and let us showe our fantasies in soche wordes as we lerneden of our dames tonge." This unlearned book may yet stimulate men to such necessary things, and the sovereign object of human desire is "love of one that is unchangeable; that is, to know and love his creature." For him to speak of Love after all the great clerks is to glean after those who have bound the sheaves. Especially, he says, he gleans after Boethius, and to increase his portion steals out of the shock of Boethius and these great workmen. "Utterly these things be no dreams ne japes, to throw to hogges, it is lyfelych meate for children of truth."

To this description of the opening I add the closing sentence of the whole work, in order that the spirit and the purpose of it may be at once made clear:

"I pray," says Chaucer, "that every man parfytely mowe knowe, through what intencion of herte this treatise have I draw. How was it the sightful Manna in desert, to children of Israell was spirituall meate? Bodily also it was, for men's bodies it nourished: and yet never the later Christ it signified. Right so a jewell betokeneth a gemme: and that is a stone vertuous or else a pearle. Margarite, a woman, betokeneth grace, learnyng or wisdom of God, or els holy church. If bread through vertue is made holy fleshe, what is it that our God saith? It is the spirite that geveth life, the flesh of nothyng it profiteth. Flesh is fleshly understanding: flesh without grace and love nought is worth. The letter sleeth, the spirite yeveth lifelich understanding. Charitie is love, and love is charity, God grant us all therein to be frended. And thus the Testament of Love is ended."

This then is the spirit of Chaucer in the 'Testament of Love.' The work is divided into three books. In the first the author, whose mirth is changed into tears, endures penance in his dark

prison, and pines for his lady precious Margaret to have mind on her servant. He invokes Love, calls on the precious Margaret for mercy and grace, and is visited in his prison by a goodly lady whose look gives gladness and comfort. It is Love, who never forgets her servants, and reminds him of the parable of the Good Shepherd who seeks his sheep that are run in the wilderness. Chaucer knows in Love's conscience that he has been willing in Love's service.

“‘All coude I never dooe as I should, yet forsothe fained I never to love otherwise than was in myne harte : and if I could have made chere to one and ithought another, as many other dooen aldaie afore myne iyen, I trowe it would not me have vailed.’ ‘Certes,’ quod she, ‘haddest thou so dooen, I would not now have thee here visited.’”

Then he confides to Love his troubles. He relates in allegory how he had fled to ship from the wild beasts on land, and Lust and Thought and Will were the shipmen who drew him on board the Ship of Travail. He tells how they were sea-driven by storm, and then he first saw her who now visited him, Love, who showed him, among the throng of beasts and fishes, a mussel in a blue shell

“had enclosed a Margarite perle, the moste precious and best that ever toforn came in my sighte, and ye tolden yourself that ilke jewell in his kinde was so good and so vertuous, that her better should I never finde, all sought I thereafter to the worldes ende, and with that I helde my peace a greate while : and ever sithen I have me bethought on the man that sought the precious Margarites, and whan he had founden one to his likyng, he solde all his good to buy that jewell : iwis thought I, and yet so I think, now have I founden the jewell that mine herte desireth, wherto should I seche further, truelie now wol I stinte, and on this Margarite I settle me for ever.”

Then he sought help, and was reproved by Love for his complaining. Love spoke, like the wise, in easy words ; and thus our English Chaucer speaks the mind that lay under his own simplicity of speech :

“Comenly the wise spoken easylye and softe for many skilles : one is, their wordes are the better beleved, and also in easy speakynge, avisement men may catche, what to put forthe and what to holden in. And also the auctoritie of easye wordes is the more, and eke they yeven the more understandyng to other intencion of the mater.”

Love having grieved the prisoner by her reproof, she “gan delyciously me comforte with sugred words, putting me in ful

hope that I shulde the Margarite getten, if I followed her hestes."

Then she comforted him in his doubt drawn from the number of the janglers who "ever more arne speking rather of evyll than of good," and grief that in his own trouble, after seven years serving for Rachel, blear-eyed Leah is brought to him. Still he must persevere. No enemy must say of him, "Lo, this man began to edifie, but for his foundement is bad, to the ende may he not bring. For mekenesse in countenaunce, with a manly herte in dedes and in longe continuance, is the conisance of my liuery to all my retinue deliuered."

You, who seek honour, complain that your name has been defamed. "Now (quod she), if men with leasinges put on the enfame, wenest thy self thereby been enpeired?" She argues with him this, and also the doubt coming of men's praise of the prosperous and censure of fault in him who hath adversity. This is the train of ideas that leads to the biographical passage which is for us the part of most importance in 'The Testament of Love.'

As in the celebration of saints, for better example, their conversion from bad to good is rehearsed, so the prisoner Chaucer imprisoned. tells us "in my youth I was drawe to be assentaunt, and in my mightes helping to certain conjuracions, and other great matters of rulynge of citezins, and thilke thinges been my drawers in and exitours [exciters] to the matters werne so painted and coloured, that at the prime face, me seemed them noble and glorious to al the people." He proceeds to say that he thought it merit that he used his diligence to further and maintain those things, and work those matters to the end. What we have seen of Chaucer's career and know of his present position makes this passage perfectly clear. The Swan and the Horse,¹ whose patriotism Gower lauded, are in the ascendant. John of Gaunt, chief of the party held to have been in conflict with the people's rights is away from England, and his partisans lie now under the wheel of Fortune, who sat lately atop of it. But John of Gaunt had no more intelligent and cordial friend than Chaucer, who had believed in the patriotic purpose he

¹ See p. 102.

assigned to his policy for the "the ruling of citizen," and was from his youth up energetically interested in the plottings of which the Court party that had looked up to the Duke of Lancaster was accused, believing the drift of his policy to be "noble and glorious to all the people." We have seen how in 1386 Chaucer was a member of the Parliament in which the struggle took place that resulted in the Duke of Gloucester's political triumph, and the overthrow of the King's administration. Ten years earlier also the common people had called a Parliament "The Good," because it withstood the party with which Chaucer, its man of shrewdest and best intellect, and also a man of action with a strong personal regard for John of Gaunt himself, was necessarily identified.¹ This precisely agrees with Chaucer's next sentence: "and trewly, lady, to tell you the sothe, me rought little of the hate of the mighty senatours in thilke cite, ne of comunes malice, for two skilles." One was, that he had comfort in the profit accruing to himself and his friends; the other, that he believed there must be just government with peace and tranquillity, if there was to be profit to the commonalty.

But tears for the bad fame into which he had run washed away the disguise, and he saw malice and rancour imagining destruction of much people, so openly that, had he been blind, with hands he might have felt all the circumstances. Every word of this tallies with the history of the troubles out of which I believe Chaucer's imprisonment to have arisen. In November, 1386, the Duke of Gloucester and Earl of Arundel, masters of the situation, obtained the Commission whereby Chaucer was deprived of his appointments in the Customs. In August, 1387, the King was arranging to resume authority at the end of the year allotted to the Commissioners. He resolved to arrest and send for trial his most obstinate opponents. The Commission was to expire on the 19th of November. King Richard entered London on the 10th. Next morning he learned that a numerous force, under the Duke of Gloucester and the Earls of Arundel and Nottingham, was advancing upon London. On the 12th the dissatisfied Lords were at Hackney with forty thousand men, and sent into the city a letter assuring the mayor

¹ See pp. 157, 160, 161.

and aldermen that their one object was to deliver the King from the hands of traitors. The Lords agreed to come into London for an interview with the King at Westminster; but being presently warned that there was an ambush of a thousand or more armed men set for them in the Mews (now Trafalgar Square, where the King's falcons were), they did not keep their appointment. The Bishop of Ely told the King the reason of their absence. Richard swore that he knew nothing of any ambush, and sent to the Mews with orders to kill any who were found there hidden with treacherous intent; but the men who had been placed there by the faction of Sir Nicholas Bramber and Sir Thomas Tryvet had by that time been dismissed, and were gone back to London. The King then again sent for the Lords, who had by this time been joined by the Duke of Lancaster's son, Henry Earl of Derby, and by the Earl of Warwick. They came with an armed guard, and were received in Westminster Hall by Richard, in his robes, and with his sceptre in his hand. The Lords declared that they were there for the good of the King and of the kingdom, to remove from the King traitors whom he harboured. These were Robert de Vere Duke of Ireland, who had also given personal affront to the great nobles as an insolent court favourite, by putting away his wife, King Edward's grand-daughter and the Duke of Gloucester's niece, for the sake of a saddler's daughter, who had come in the train of Anne of Bohemia; also Alexander Neville, Archbishop of York; Michael de la Pole, son of the late king's merchant in Lombard Street, himself king's merchant and Earl of Suffolk; Sir Robert Tresilian, false judge; and the false knight, Nicholas Bramber of London, the king's draper. Throwing down their gloves, Gloucester and his allies declared themselves ready, by duel, to prove these men traitors.

Meanwhile the Duke of Ireland was away raising an army in the neighbourhood of Chester; but as he marched with it Londonward he was defeated at Radcot Bridge by the Earl of Derby, who happened to be on the field before the other Lords came up. The Duke himself escaped; but the letters were taken by which the King had urged him to bring an army to London, where Richard declared himself ready to live and die with his favourite. A messenger also was intercepted who was

carrying to the French King letters with Richard's offer to give up what England held in France. The Lords, having defeated the force raised against them, marched their army to London, where the King was about to keep Christmas in the Tower, as the place of most security. Their troops encamped in the fields near the Tower, and, after much debate, the Mayor, on the part of the Londoners, opened the city to the soldiers, offering supply to them all of bread, cheese, wine, and ale. The Lords had the Thames watched to prevent the King's escape by water; and, after sending a couple of hundred men-at-arms to search the Tower, as precaution against treachery, went to his Majesty there, and curtly produced to him his letters to the Duke of Ireland and the King of France. They left him confused and tearful, promising that he would say more to them next day at Westminster. At night he changed his mind; and he went next day to Westminster only upon the threat of Gloucester and the other Lords, that if he did not, they would choose another king. In that meeting at Westminster Richard agreed to the required banishments. Gloucester and his party proceeded then to make many arrests.

In the beginning of February, 1388, a Parliament met in London, at which Gloucester and Arundel attended, with an army large enough to subdue any rebellion against its authority. The sitting of this Parliament continued until Whitsuntide. It hanged Chief Justice Tresilian and the ex-mayor Sir Nicholas Bramber, of whom it was said among other things, that he had designed to change the name of London to Little Troy, and be its Duke; and that he had made out lists of several thousands of persons from whom resistance was feared, and who were all suddenly to be slain. Other men were hanged or beheaded, obnoxious justiciars were banished, and the King was compelled to swear assent to all these judgments.¹

Here, then, are the events referred to by Chaucer in his 'Testament of Love,' as having occasioned his imprisonment;

¹ These details are from 'Thomas of Walsingham' (ed. Riley), vol. ii. pp. 164-177. The condition of the country may be further suggested by the fact that at a second Parliament held in this year 1388, at Cambridge, after the 8th of September, all public plays and games were forbidden except shooting at the butts.

and I have no hesitation in assigning a period within the 122 days of the sitting of the Parliament that met in London at the beginning of February, 1388, as the date of the imprisonment and of the beginning of the 'Testament of Love.'¹ Of these troubles, Chaucer continues:

"Now than the persones that soche thinges have caste to redresse, for wrathe of my first meddlynge, shopen me to dwel in this pynande prison, til Lachases my threde no lenger wolde tweyne. And ever I was sought, if me lyst to have grace of my lyfe and frenesse of that prison, I shoulde openly confesse how peace might be ensured to enden al the first rancours. It was fullie supposed my knowing to be ful in tho matters."

Then, Chaucer tells us, he thought that any man should maintain the right and destroy a wrong, though he impeached his own companion if he were guilty; and that people maintained strife through being blind and beguiled of old.

"Also the cytye of London, that is to me so dere and swete, in which I was forth growen, and more kindly loue have I to that place than to any other in yerth, as euery kindly [*i.e.* natural] creature hath full appetite to that place of his kindly engendoure, and to wilne reste and peace in that stede to abyde: thilke peace shold thus there have been broken, and of al wise [men] it is commended and desired."

Now that we see it in connexion with its context, can we doubt that, in this passage, Chaucer explicitly declares himself a Londoner? He adds, "I then so stered by al these wayes to forme nempned, declared certain pointes in this wise." And he tells how those whom he followed without knowing their secret meaning, drew also the feeble-witted people to clamour after things for the common advantage, "whiche (quod they) maye not stand, but we ben executours of the matters and auctorite of execucion, by comen election to us delyvered; and that must enter by strength of your maintenaunce. If we are put out, your old hinderers will come in. Tyrannous citzens will have the government of your citie, and bring in destruction, unless we have the common administration to abate such evils."

¹ The only suggestion hitherto made to explain this piece of autobiography in 'The Testament of Love,' is that which places Chaucer at an impossible date, 1384, in the impossible position of a supporter of the citizens of London against the King when they set up John of Northampton for their mayor. See p. 160.

That the citizens of London really were thus won to the King's party we have seen. There were citizens, Chaucer tells us it was said, afraid of punishment for their extortions, who were against all good intentions; and he adds, "Trewly the meaninge under these wordes, was fully to have apeched the mighty senators which hadden heauy hearts for the misgouernance they had seen." The reference here is directly and obviously to the stern men of the reforming Parliament.

The next passage refers more closely to the movements among citizens of London. Sir Nicholas Bramber was, in 1388, one of the first whom that Parliament caused to be hanged as a traitor. He was Mayor for the third time in 1387, when he was succeeded by Nicholas Exton. The Duke of Ireland and the Earl of Suffolk were accused of seeking to engage Exton to entrap the Duke of Gloucester and divers of his friends by inviting them to sup at the house of a certain citizen, there to assassinate them all. Sir Nicholas Bramber was charged with assent to this plot. Richard Exton, it is said, not only rejected it, but warned the Duke of his danger.¹ Chaucer speaks next of a free election, in which a misruling governor, who was forsaken by the majority, planned to hinder the election, and have a new one for the choosing of himself, with much disturbance. If this passage has not a more national signification, it charges on Bramber a design, as chief supporter of the Crown party among the citizens in a critical time, of keeping his hold on the mayoralty; and when Exton was elected, he being a doubtful friend, who proved an enemy, of obtaining the reversal of the choice. Bramber, we have seen, was even credited with a plot to make himself master of London, as a Duke of Little Troy. But at this time the Londoners were much disturbed. "They were," says Walsingham, "in great fear, weighing diverse perils—that is to say, the King's wrath if they opened to the nobles; but if they shut them out, the wrath of

¹ In Thomas of Walsingham's 'Historia Anglicana' will be found the authority for these historical details with fuller information. Walsingham took it from the St. Alban's Chronicle, made probably between 1377 and 1392, while the events were happening. See in the series of Chronicles and Memorials issued under direction of the Master of the Rolls, 'Walsingham's Chronicle,' edited by H. P. Riley, vol. ii. pp. 145-175.

the indiscreet populace that came with them, and were ready to break in the walls or gates of the city if they were in the least exasperated. There remained also another sufficiently grave danger; because unless the corporation opened to the Lords, the commonalty and poor of the city, who more affected sedition than peace, prepared to let them in with their people for plunder of the houses of the rich."

Whatever Chaucer told, he adds, those who were concerned, without pressure of paining duress, openly admitted to be true. For "the telling out of falsely conspired matters" his old friends called him false, yet they admitted he had spoken true. But, asks Love, visitant of his prison, what if they had denied that you spoke truth? It is well known, Chaucer replies, that I offered wager of battle. "It is well wiste bothe amongst the greatest, and other of the realme, that I profered my body so largely into provinge of tho thinges, that Mars shuld have judged thende; but for sothenesse of my wordes they durst not to thilke judge trust." And though Love tells him that now surely his honour is cleared, Chaucer urges that it may be said he ought rather to have died than told his knowledge. Love replies that an oath bound him. He was bound, on pain of perjury, to speak the whole truth without reservation. Again, urges his comforter, "Which of the friends you had served helped you in exile, or refreshed you by so much as the least coined plate that walketh in money? Who was sorry for your suffering?"

"And if thou liste saie the sothe, all that meinie that in this brigge thee broughten, lokeden rather after thine helpes, than thee to have releved. Owen not yet some of hem money for hir commons? Paidest not thou for some of hir despences, till thei were tourned out of Zelande? Who yave thee ever ought, for any riding thou maidest? Lo for which a companie thou medlest? . . . What might thou more have doen than thou diddest, but if thou wouldest in a false quarrell have been a stinking martire?"

He has been an example of much error, and must now be an example of manifold correction. Love reads this lesson; but the uneasy poet still asserts himself against the charge of having been false to his friends. He was honest in his custom-house work. "While I administered the office of common doying, as in rulyng of the stablishementes emonges the people, I defouled

never my conscience for ne maner deede, but ever by wit and by counsail of the wisest, the matters werren drawn to their right endes." Love reasons of the narrowness of fame, and asks—again asserting London to be Chaucer's native town—"How should then the name of a singuler Londenoyse passe the glorious name of London, whiche by many it is commended, and by many it is lacked, and in many mo places in yearth not knowen." In search of vain praisings the reward of virtue may be missed. Love preaches the divinity in manhood, and says to the captive, "If thou work, thou art above all other things, save God alone."

Let him seek the Pearl therefore. He complains of the hard dealings of fortune. They have taught him to know his friends; and if that Margaret shine to himward, he is more blessed than in worldly joy.

Here ends the first book. The rest of the work is purely spiritual teaching; but the character of Chaucer shines, as in his other works, through a long passage in the second book, which repeats his often-enforced teaching of the true reverence and honour due to women. A few sentences from it will explain its character:—

"What cause han ye women to dispise? Better fruite than they bene, ne swetter spices to you behoue, mowe ye not finde as farre as worldly bodyes stretchen. Loke to their forming; at the makinge of their persones by God in joye of paradise, fer goodnesse of mannes propre bodye were they maked, after the sawes of the Bible, rehersing Goddes wordes in this wise: it is good to mankinde that we make to him an helper. So in paradise for your helpe was this tree graffed, out of whiche all linage of man descendeth: yf a man be noble frute, of noble frute it is sprongen: the blysse of paradise to mennes sory hertes yet in this tree abyde. O noble helpes ben these trees, and gentil jewel to ben worshipped of every good creature: he that hem anoith doth his owne shame, it is a comfortable perle ayenst al tenes. Every company is mirthed by their present being. Trewly I wist never vertue, but a woman were therof the rote."

We must not pass from the 'Testament of Love' without considering what influence its biographical details, as now interpreted, should have upon our knowledge of his character. If in that bitter spring of the year 1388 Chaucer had been among those who were hanged, by what some called "the Merciless Parliament," we should have lost the *Canterbury Tales*; but although his life was threatened—"and ever," he says, "I was

sought, if me list to have grace of my lyfe and frenesse of that prison" . . . , and although he could not have been secure, for some of the executions were unlooked for in their severity, there must have been little chance of a capital sentence against the famous poet. Merciless indeed must have been English reformers who would have hanged Chaucer at Tyburn! The land was all full-filled with his songs, and the fame of his genius extended beyond our own shores. But he was known also in and out of England as a shrewd student conversant alike with men and books, whose clear head had been freely employed, from his youth up, in political affairs. He was attached naturally to the original court party by long intimacy with John of Gaunt, and the old personal and family ties that bound him to his friend and patron. John of Gaunt believed in the patriotic aims of his own policy; and although popular feeling had been strongly against him, there had been enough of dignity and consistency in his statecraft to make him the leader of a party numbering its proper share of honest men. Chaucer had been busy in his political service, and, during John of Gaunt's absence from England, remained naturally true to the court view of politics. But in the absence of his uncle Lancaster, who had been formidable even to him, the weak Richard indulged himself by making his unworthy favourite, Robert de Vere (who had been Earl of Oxford), Duke of Ireland. In the previous year many nobles had been angered by this man's elevation to the rank of Marquis of Dublin; and the basest reasons were assigned for Richard's love to him. During the year of the Commission of Reform enforced by Gloucester—the commission that had dismissed Chaucer from his place in the Customs—Richard and his favourites were plotting to recover power. De Vere was at his right hand with dishonourable counsels, and the field was open for mean plots and intrigues. The baser part of any plot would be concealed from men of Chaucer's character. For them it was enough that the King was intimidated, that his friends were persecuted. Chaucer knew himself that, probably on evidence of his being actively opposed to Gloucester, he had been deprived of his appointments: yet in the 'Testament of Love' we have learnt, incidentally, that no enemy accused him of dishonesty in the administration of his office. It could be said to

honest men who served the court, that the Reform Commission was subverting the constitution, and must therefore be itself subverted.

When, by main force, Gloucester and the other nobles crushed the plots of those who passed for the King's friends, Chaucer was underfoot among the rest, and sent to prison. How cruel a pinch he suffered is shown by the fact, that it was during the sitting of the Parliament called by some "the Wonderful," and by others "the Merciless," that he was forced to sell his pensions. It was on May-day, 1388, that they were cancelled and assigned to a John Scalby.¹ That "grene and lusty May" must have been no sweet season to the sixty-year-old poet;—bitterest of Mays if, as is possible, the pensions were sold to pay a fine laid on him when he was released from prison.

In prison, as he tells us, he "ever was sought" to declare against his late associates. It was worth some trouble to separate a Londoner of Chaucer's intellectual and moral weight among the people from a party that was being charged, justly or unjustly, with atrocious plots, which would be discredited wherever it had also to be said that he was privy to them. Evidence, or apparent evidence, of the infamy of his late associates would be assiduously brought to him as fast as it was produced, until at last he said that, little as he had known of them, the murderous designs which had been concealed from him were so evident, that "if they were not seen they might be felt." And had not even the son of John of Gaunt and Duchess Blanche, the Earl of Derby himself, joined Gloucester's party in this quarrel, and been the man who stopped the Duke of Ireland's march at Radcot Bridge? The son of Duchess Blanche was Chaucer's hearty friend. Almost his first act when he became King Henry IV. was to double the old poet's pension, then receivable;² and though, in the spring of the year 1388, he had not influence enough to save from the scaffold old Sir Simon Burley, but could only change his halter into an axe—that execution leading to sharp quarrels between young Bolingbroke and his colleagues—he could not have failed to help in the persuading of so notable an old ally as Geoffrey

¹ See p. 162.

² See pp. 163, 164.

Chaucer to dissociate himself from his dishonourable friends. So, therefore, Chaucer did; and told frankly as much as he knew, which, he adds, was no more than, without pressure, the men who said that he played false to them owned to be true. Certainly it would not have been worth while to risk life or liberty for such men as those were shown to be who had been chiefs of the plotting during the past year. But that Chaucer was not held by the King, or the King's better friends, to have forfeited their friendship, is shown by the fact that he obtained no reinstatement, or recompense for his losses, from Gloucester and his party between May, 1388, and May, 1389, when the King, suddenly and quietly, resumed his authority; but that after the King's recovery of power, in May, 1389, and before John of Gaunt's return to England, in November of that year, Richard made Chaucer clerk of the works of his palaces.

During the next eight years, or until 1397, there was nothing in the King's conduct to excite rebellion, and Geoffrey Chaucer and John Gower were alike his loyal subjects. Then came the King's *coup d'état*. The old patriot Gower cast away his sense of loyalty to such a king as Richard proved himself; and Chaucer's loyalty could not have survived the next year, 1398, when, on the death of John of Gaunt, Richard seized his vast possessions, disinheriting his cousin, Duchess Blanche's son, who had been banished three months before. When Henry of Bolingbroke came back to claim more than his dukedom and his patrimony, he had Chaucer, as well as Gower and the English people, in the number of his friends; but in that later time Geoffrey Chaucer was a ripe and cheerful old man of three score and ten, who had his *Canterbury Tales* in mind. He had been writing stories in verse, and translating pious treatises. He had found the proper outlet for his genius, and was busy, or about to become busy, over the devising of that imperishable framework which was to connect and set forth to advantage the tales he had written, and meant yet to write. The condition in which it is left to us makes it certain that he was employed upon this framework when he died. It set the crown on his life's labours, and the consideration of it will end, therefore, this account of them.

There is not much else to discuss. In 1391 or 1392—that is

to say, eight or nine years before his death—he wrote a book of instruction for his son Lewis, then ten years old; simply and tenderly—true to the pure domestic feeling ^{The Conclusions of the Astrolabe.} that we have found shining through his verse—employed in a father's duty of encouraging his child's taste for ennobling studies. Chaucer's

Conclusions of the Astrolabe

begin thus (I have modernised the spelling):—

“Little Lewis, my son, I perceive well by certain evidences thine ability to learn sciences, touching numbers and proportions, and also well consider I thy busy prayer in especial to learn the treatise of the astrolabe. Then foras-much as a philosopher saith, he wrappeth him in his friend that condescendeth to the rightful prayers of his friend: therefore I have given thee a sufficient Astrolabe for our horizon, composed after the latitude of Oxford, upon the which by mediation of this little treatise, I purpose to teach thee a certain number of conclusions, pertaining to the same instrument. I say a certain number of conclusions for three causes. The first cause is this. Trust well that all the conclusions that have been found, or else possibly might be found in so noble an instrument as in the astrolabe, be unknown perfectly to any mortal men in this region, as I suppose. Another cause is this, that soothly in any casts of the astrolabe that I have seen there be some conclusions that will not in all things perform their behests: and some of them be too hard for thy tender age of ten years to conceive. By this treatise, divided in five parts, will I show thee wonder light rules and naked words in English, for Latin ne canst thou not yet but small, my little son. But nevertheless sufficeth to thee these true conclusions in English, as well as sufficeth to those noble clerks Greeks these same conclusions in Greek, and to the Arabians in Arabic, and to Jews in Hebrew, and to the Latin folk in Latin: which Latin folk had them first out of divers other languages, and wrote them in their own tongue, that is to say in Latin. . . . And, Lewis, if it so be that I show thee in my little English as true conclusions touching this matter, and not only as true but as many and subtle conclusions, as be showed in Latin in any common treatise of the astrolabe, con me the more thank and pray God save the King, that is Lord of this language.”

Here, then, we see Chaucer, still on the domestic side, as a father anxious to foster the interest shown by his ten-year-old boy Lewis in the study of the heavens. He has given him an astrolabe, one of the instruments then common for taking the heights of stars, the familiar badge of the astrologer, and he compiles, as he says, also from the old astrologers, a simple English description of its parts, with account of the way to use it, and the curious problems that even a clever child may learn to solve by help of it. He shrewdly suggests in so doing his belief that plain English is the best language in which to carry ideas to the English people, and that by using it we do as the Latins did, who wrote in their own vernacular. Of the five parts of Chaucer's little book devised for his boy's education, only two remain: 1, a description of the Astrolabe, its

ring, turret, "mother," its four lines of N. S. E. W., degrees, twelve signs, circle of days, circle of months, names of holidays of the Calendar, scale, rule, pin, &c. &c.; 2, a collection of the problems that can be worked out by the Astrolabe; as to take the altitude of sun or star, to know the time of day or night by sun or star, to take the latitude of any place after the latitude of Oxford to which the instrument is planned, and so forth. Parts III., IV., V. contained:—III., divers tables; IV., a theory of the motions of the heavenly bodies with a table for the moon; and, V., an introduction, 'after the statutes of our doctors,' to the theory of astrology, with tables of equations of houses, after the latitude of Oxford, and tables of dignities of planets, and other notable things.

Among the problems in the second part, showing how to find the degree in which the sun is day by day, Chaucer writes—"The year of our Lord 1391, the 12th day of March, at midday, "I would know . . . I sought in the back half of mine astrolabe "and found" . . . The same date is given, a problem or two later, as that on which "I would know the time of the day . . . I took," &c. Obviously, nobody putting a hypothetical case in that way to a child would go out of his way to name with a past verb a date still in the future.

Queen Anne-
lida and False
Arcite. 'Of Queen Annelida and False Arcite' is a fragment of a poem, telling how when Thebes stood desolate and bare after the death of Eteocles and Polynices, "Annelida, the Queen of Ermony," was in the town, and gave her whole love in return for the insincere attentions of a false Arcite. He was double in love, and "saw another lady proud and new," who held him narrow up by the bridle, and made him turn and wend at her will. The poet—I can hardly think he was Chaucer—gives the 'Complaint of Annelida to False Arcite,' and is about to give also the woful queen's song of sacrifice to Mars when the fragment ends. It has little merit. 'First follow I Stace, and after him Corinne,' the writer says, and, after three stanzas of invocation, quotes three lines of Statius (Book XII., l. 519-21), beginning "Jamque domos patrias," before his story starts with a free translation of them, and of a dozen lines or more next following. Whether the writer of this poem had access to a version then extant of Corinna's lost Greek poem on the story of Thebes, is a question of no importance, which it is impossible to answer.

There remain a few short pieces related to Chaucer's 'balades, roundels, virelay.' The balade I have described already. A

roundel, or roundelay (old Fr. rondelet), was a poem usually of thirteen verses, eight in one rhyme and five in another.

A virelai (from virer, to turn) was a poem in short lines of seven or eight syllables, and with only two rhymes. The poet after using one rhyme for some time, 'turned' to the other. A piece with this name, placed, upon no known MS. authority, among Chaucer's minor poems, is not strictly a virelai, and has no mark on it of Chaucer's mind. The piece miscalled in two MSS. 'Balade de Vilage (? Visage) sauns Peynture,' is a triple balade, written probably in 1388. The argument of the first part is, I have learnt by adversity to know who are my true friends; and he can defy fortune who is master of himself. The argument of the next part, that Fortune speaks, is, Man makes his own wretchedness. What may come you know not; you were born under my rule of change; your anchor holds. Of the third part of the poem, in which the Poet and Fortune each speak, the sum of the argument is, that what blind men call fortune is the righteous will of God. Heaven is firm, this world is mutable. The piece closes with Fortune's call upon the Princes to relieve this man of his pain or pray his best friend "of his noblesse" that he may attain to some better estate.

Chaucer's 'Balade sent to King Richard' has for its refrain, "That all is lost for lack of stedfastnesse."

Another balade represents Chaucer's doctrine that gentility descends from Christ. This is quoted as his master Chaucer's by Henry Scogan in a moral ballad of his to the king's sons, published in Speght's Chaucer. Another of Chaucer's poems is addressed to Scogan, whom Ben Jonson represented as—

" a fine gentleman and Master of Arts
Of Henry the Fourth's time, that made disguises,
For the king's sons, and writ in ballad-royal,
Daintily well."¹

Some lines to Adam, his scrivener, express Chaucer's care in correcting, rubbing, and scraping the bad copies of his works. And in his 'Good Counsel,' said to have been written when he was near death, he tells a man to be true, peaceable, and patient, look up on high, thank God for all, be led by the spirit, not by the flesh; "and trouth shall thee deliver, it is no drede."

¹ 'Masque of the Fortunate Isles.'

CHAPTER VII.

THE 'Canterbury Tales' express the whole power of Chaucer, yet it is only by such a study as we have now made of the sequence of his other works, that we can be fairly qualified to understand the poet, while we are delighting in this chief group of his poems.

Chaucer's
'Canterbury
Tales.'

There are two obstacles to a study of Chaucer himself in the 'Canterbury Tales.'

One is the essentially dramatic spirit in which he occupied himself with his design, giving to his pilgrims of either sex all the variety of rank and character that he could fairly group into a single company; in order that, through them and their stories, he might reach to a broad view of life in its most typical forms, fleshly and spiritual. Had the mind of Chaucer stirred among us in the days of Queen Elizabeth, his works would have been plays, and Shakespeare might have found almost his match. But, except in the miracle plays and mysteries, which seldom represented ordinary human life, there was in Chaucer's time no writing formally dramatic. Dramatic genius could only speak through such poems as were acceptable to the readers of that generation; and through such poems, therefore, Chaucer poured his images of life, bright with variety of incident, and subtle in perception of all forms of character. He had that highest form of genius which can actually touch every part of human life, and, at the contact, be stirred to a simple sympathetic utterance. Out of a sympathy so large, humour flows unforced, and the pathos shines upon us with a rare tranquillity. The meanness or the grandeur, fleshly grossness or ideal beauty, of each form of life is reflected back from the unrippled mirror of Chaucer's 'Canterbury Tales,' as from no other work of man, except the Plays of Shakespeare. The mind of Milton is, for a dramatist, too strongly moved by his didactic earnestness towards the pure ideal. Chaucer alone comes near to Shakespeare in that supreme quality of the dramatist which enables him to

show the characters of men as they are betrayed by men themselves, wholly developed as if from within, not as described from without by an imperfect and prejudiced observer. It is a part of the same quality that makes noticeable in Chaucer, as in Shakespeare, the variety and truth of his different creations of women. As the range of Shakespeare was from Imogen to Dame Quickly and lower, so the range of Chaucer is from the ideal patience of the wife Griselda, or the girlish innocence and grace of Emelie in the 'Knight's Tale,' to the Wife of Bath and lower; and in each of these great poets the predominating sense is of the beauty and honour of true womanhood.

If there were many Englishmen who read what we have of the 'Canterbury Tales' straight through, it would not be necessary to say that, even in the fragment as it stands, expression of the poet's sense of the worth and beauty of womanhood very greatly predominates over his satire of the weaknesses of women. His satire, too, is genial. For the lowest he has no scorn, as he has for the hypocrisies of men who wear religion as the cloak to their offences. We have seen something of this in his transformation of Boccaccio's impure Cressida into a woman whose true dignity and perfect delicacy is slowly undermined. So, too, the transformed Pandarus jests, gossips, prosés, and plots through the poem, being shown dispassionately as a character that we might see in life, and of which we are to think as we think of our living neighbours. Yet he is so shown, that, as Sir Philip Sidney said, we have "the Terentian Gnatho and our Chaucer's Pandar so exprest, that we now use their names to signify their trades."¹ And let us not forget that Boccaccio described his Pandar, unconscious of infamy in his part, as a young and honourable knight. It was only when we compared the English poem with its Italian original, and saw thereby in what spirit Chaucer had worked, that we could distinguish the mind of the English poet, while we read his 'Troilus and Criseyde.' And thus it is that, to a considerable extent, although not altogether, in the 'Canterbury Tales,' as in the plays of Shakespeare, the dramatic genius of Chaucer has obscured his personality.

¹ Sidney's 'Defence of Poesie.' Works; ed. 1605, p. 499.

The second obstacle to a study of Chaucer himself in the 'Canterbury Tales' is the fact that we have little or no indication of the order in which they were written, or of the relation of any one of them to a particular time of his life. The works of his which have been hitherto discussed were usually upon themes more or less personal, and we were seldom without some indication of the time when they were written. Therefore it was possible so far to connect them with his life, as slowly, point by point, to make them furnish cumulative evidence as to a few essential features in his character. We have seen, for example, that, in a sense of his own, he takes the Daisy for his flower; and rises high above all poets of his age in honour to marriage, and praise of the purity of the wife's white daisy crown. But stories written by Chaucer at wide intervals, and very various in merit, were, in the last years of his life, being transformed into 'Canterbury Tales.' These express all his power, represent his whole mind, from the lightest jest to the profoundest earnest. They gather rays, as it were, out of all the quarters of his life; but its horizon is not to be measured in the little sun they form.

Ten months before his death, Chaucer, aged seventy-one, moved into the house in the garden of St. Mary's Chapel, Westminster, of which he then took a long lease. It is not likely, although possible, that when he did that he was upon his death-bed. If the appendage to the 'Canterbury Tales,' which appears in most MSS. as Chaucer's retractation, be not the invention of some stupidly well-meaning monk, but was obtained from Chaucer himself, then we must suppose a period at the close of his life during which his intellect was clouded; and he took his knowledge of himself, as well as the lease of his house, from his clerical landlords. It is more probable that the retractation is a monk's revenge upon the satirist of cowed hypocrisy, and that in his new house Chaucer went on with his latest occupations until he was seized with his last illness, a few months, or weeks, or days, or hours before his end. If so, it was in that house in the garden of St. Mary's Chapel, Westminster, that he ceased from his work upon the 'Canterbury Tales.' Not half of it was done, and what was done lay by the poet's writing-

table yet imperfectly arranged, when his prosperous eldest son, Thomas, whose right it was to do so, doubtless fulfilled his duty in taking charge of his dead father's papers.

Geoffrey Chaucer, who had taken delight from his youth up in the lively genius of Boccaccio, while repelled by the reflection of Italian morals in his images of life, had drawn from Boccaccio's 'Decameron' the first hint of his crowning effort as a writer. He would form a collection of the stories he had rhymed or might yet rhyme, which he could leave behind him firmly bound together by a device like that which has, for all time, made one work of the hundred tales of the 'Decameron.' But Chaucer's plan was better than that of the 'Decameron,' and looked to a much greater result. The English poet must have felt his mastery as he set his pilgrims on their way, and had every incitement to proceed with a work in which he was so perfectly achieving that which he had set himself to do. He could not have laid the 'Canterbury Tales' aside for work of less account. And if he did, where is it? The last line that Chaucer wrote, when he sat for the last time at his desk as poet, pen in hand, must have been some one of the lines of the 'Canterbury Tales.' Perhaps the sense of his approaching death caused him to end his labour among men with the discourse, or translation of a discourse, concerning sin, confession, and penance, which closes the work as we now have it, under the name of the 'Parson's Tale.' If so, the last words Chaucer wrote at his desk—certainly the last words of the 'Canterbury Tales,' as we now read them—look to the Heaven "ther as the body of man that whilom was seek and frel, feble and mortal, is immortal, and so strong, and so hool, that ther may no thing empeire it; ther nys neyther honger, ne thurst, ne colde, but every soule replenished with the sight of the parfyt knowyng of God. This blisful regne may men purchace by poverté espirituel, and the glorie by lowenes, the plenté of joye by hunger and thurst, and reste by travaile, and the lif by deth and mortificacioun of synne. To thilke lyf he us brynge, that boughte us with his precious blode. Amen."

Boccaccio, who died twenty-five years before Chaucer, placed the scene of his 'Decameron' in a garden to which seven fashionable ladies had retired with three fashionable gentlemen,

during the plague that devastated Florence in 1348.¹ The persons were all of the same class, young and rich, with no concern in life beyond the bandying of compliments. They shut themselves up in a delicious garden of the sort common in courtly inventions of the middle ages, and were occupied in sitting about idly, telling stories to each other. The tales were usually dissolute, often witty, sometimes exquisitely poetical, and always told in simple charming prose. The purpose of the storytellers was to help each other to forget the duties on which they had turned their backs, and stifle any sympathies they might have had for the terrible griefs of their friends and neighbours, who were dying a few miles away.

Chaucer substituted for the courtly Italian ladies and gentlemen, who withdrew from fellowship with the world, as large a group as he could form of English people, of ranks widely differing, in hearty human fellowship together. Instead of setting them down to lounge in a garden, he mounted them on horseback, set them on the high road, and gave them somewhere to go and something to do. The bond of fellowship was not fashionable acquaintance and a common selfishness. It was religion; not, indeed, in a form so solemn as to make laughter and jest unseemly, yet, according to the custom of his day, a popular form of religion—the pilgrimage to the shrine of Thomas à Becket—into which men entered with much heartiness. It happened to be a custom which had one of the best uses of religion, in serving as a bond of fellowship in which conventional divisions of rank were, for a time, disregarded; partly because of the sense, more or less joined to religious exercise of any sort, that men are equal before God, and also, in no slight degree, because men of all ranks trotting upon the high road with chance companions, whom they might never see again, have been in all generations disposed to put off restraint, and enjoy such intercourse as might relieve the tediousness of travel.

Boccaccio could produce nothing of mark in description of his ten fine ladies and gentlemen. The procession of Chaucer's pilgrims is the very march of man on the high road of life.

¹ See p. 41.

There are knight and squire, sailor and merchant, parson and doctor, monk and nun, the ploughman who tills the earth, the bailiff who garners its corn and the miller who grinds it.

Finally, Chaucer's Tales, except a moral and a religious treatise each in prose, are poems, which, though they include such incidents as were thought most merry in his time, contrast most nobly with the tales of the 'Decameron' in their prevailing tone. But, before there is more said of the Tales, what of the Pilgrimage?

The wealth of Canterbury Cathedral dates especially from 1173, when Becket was canonized, two or three years after his murder, of which the date is December 29, 1170. The monks of Canterbury, after Becket's death, were still violent in maintenance of that struggle for the triumph of the Church over the Crown in which Becket had fallen. Henry II. was a powerful upholder of the independence of the State against encroachments of the Roman clergy, and he was a king of strong will not to be fought down in open war. Of the indirect ways found for battle of the Church against the principle that he maintained, none was more obvious and easy than to make the most of Becket's murder. It was a foul crime, staining the cause of lay independence in all secular affairs. The crime was obvious, the piety and the sincerity of Becket were unquestioned. Then let the Pope canonize the representative of his own claim or the claim of the Church to be supreme over all temporal authorities, and cultivate Becket's memory to the utmost as that of a saint and martyr. This would improve to the use of the Church the indignation felt by good men at the act and manner of his murder. Devotees, therefore, were stimulated in their impulse to dedicate to him temples and offerings. He was the martyr of the Church then militant, and represented the great struggle of the time. Honours paid to him were paid, whether consciously or not, to the principle of self-aggrandisement for which the Church battled with various success. The battle yet continues; some holding with pure sincerity to the belief that a supreme Church would secure speedier and surer dominance for the religious spirit, others believing as sincerely that the dominance would be of form alone, and tend only to

quench the spirit by destroying liberty of thought. To show that the rights of the Church, as maintained by Becket, were just, a divine endorsement was claimed by innumerable miracles. Becket was murdered six days before Christmas. There was thunder in the night of the next Christmas-day. Those, said the Church,¹ were thunders "inviting mankind from divers parts to come and witness the new miracles of St. Thomas the Martyr; that, as he had shed his blood for the universal Church, so his martyrdom might be fixed in the pious memory of all men." Thus there was not a week lost after Becket's death before the suggestion was made of the Canterbury Pilgrimages.

In 1220 Stephen Langton translated the little inventoried parcels of flesh, blood, bones, and hairs, which, with the skull and wound of his death, made up the body of Becket, to the shrine prepared for him behind the high altar. On that occasion the Archbishop paid the tavern-bills of all pilgrims between London and Canterbury, and set the channels in Canterbury running wine.

Of the Pilgrimage to Canterbury, as it was when Chaucer wrote his 'Canterbury Tales,' we have a lively record in the account left by Master Thorpe, heretical priest, of the private argument between himself and Archbishop Thomas Arundel, held in a prison in the castle of Saltwood, on the Sunday after Lammas in the year 1407. The end of the discussion was that Thorpe, who remained firm to his tenets as a Wicliffite, was removed to a fouler dungeon, in which, probably, he died. Among the heretical points in his preaching at Shrewsbury which were successively discussed, is this :—

"And than he said to me: 'What saist thou to the Thirde Poynte that is certified against the, preching openly in Shrewisbury, that Pilgrimage is not lefull? And ouer this thou saidist, that those men and women that go on pilgrimagis to Canterbery, to Beuerley, to Karlington, to Walsinghame, and to ony soche other placis, are accursed, and made foolisch, spending their goodes in waste.'"

Thorpe answered that there were two manner of pilgrimages, and that one of them, he knew, was pleasant to God. He called

¹ Roger of Wendover, under the year 1172.

them true pilgrims who were travelling, each in his own station, towards the bliss of heaven. Having described the character of these, he admitted he had said—

“As their werkes shew the moste part of men and women that go now on pilgrimagis have not thes forsaid conditions, nor loueth to besy them feithfully for to have. For as I well know, syns I have full often assaide, examyne whosoever will twentie of thes pilgrimis, and he shall not fynde thre men or women that knowe surely a commaundment of God, nor can say their Pater-Noster and Ave-Maria, nor their Credo redely in ony maner of language. And as I have learnid and also know somewhat by experience of thes same pilgrimis, tellyng the cause why that many men and women go hither and thither now on pilgrimages, it is more for the helthe of their bodies than of their soules, more for to have richesse and prosperitie of thys worlde, than for to be enryched with vertues in their souls, more to have here worldely and fleschely friendship, than for to have friendship of God and of his seintes in Heuen . . . For the commaundmentis of God they will nother knowe nor keape, nor conforme them to lyve verteously by example of Christe and of his Seyntis. Wherefore syr, I have prechid and taucht openly, and so I purpose all my lyfe time to do with God's helpe, saying that soche fond people wast blamefully God's goods in ther veyne pilgrimagis, spending their goodes upon vicious hostellers, which ar ofte unclene women of their bodies; and at the leste those goodes with the which thei shoulde doo werkis of mercie after Goddis bidding to pore nedy men and women. Thes poor mennis goodes and their lyuelode thes runners about offer to rich priestis, which have mekill more lyuelode than they neade: and thus those goodes they waste wilfully and spende them unjustely ageinst Goddis bidding upon straungers, with which they sholde helpe and releve after Goddis will their poor nedy neighbours at home: ye and ouer this foly, ofte tymes diuerse men and women of thes runners thus madly hither and thither in to pilgrimage borowe hereto other mennis goodes, ye and sometyme they stele mennis goodes hereto, and they pay them neuer ageinc. Also sir, I know well that whan diuerse men and women will go thus after their own willes, and fynding out one pilgrimage, they will orden with them before to haue with them both men and women that can well syng wanton songes, and some other pilgremis will haue with them baggepipes; so that euery towne they come throwe, what with the noyse of their synging, and with the sounde of their piping, and with the jangelyng of their Canterbury bellis, and with the barkyng out of doggis after them, that they make more noise then if the kyng came there awaye with all his clarions, and many other men-strelles. And if these men and women be a moneth in their pilgrimage, many of them shall be an half year after great jangelers, tale tellers, and lyers.

“And the Archbishop said to me, ‘Leude losell, thou seest not ferre ynough in this mater, for thou considerest not the great trauell of pilgremys, therefore thou blamest that thing that is praisable. I say to the that it is right well done, that pilgremys haue with them both syngers, and also pipers, that whan one of them that goeth barfoote striketh his too upon a stone and hurteth hym sore, and maketh hym to blede; it is well done that he or his felow begyn then a songe, or else take out of his bosome a bagge-pype for to driue away with

soche myrthe the hurt of his felow. For with soche solace the trauell and werinesse off pylgrimes is lightly and merily broughte forth.¹

In Chaucer's company of pilgrims, neither barefoot nor foot-sore, each fellow-traveller carried his wit for bagpipe. So, lightly and merrily, the travel and weariness of the pilgrims was brought forth, and that with a music that, were Chaucer's whole design fulfilled, would have satisfied the conscience even of Master William Thorpe. For it is the work of a man who knew the manner of that true pilgrimage of life, against which the stout-hearted Wicliffite had never preached.

Chaucer's pilgrims started from the Tabard. Of many Southwark hostelries, the chief was in High Street, The Pilgrims. the Tabard. A tabard is the sleeveless coat on which arms were embroidered, when it was worn by nobles, as now by the heralds for their coats of arms in service. At the Southwark inns, the companies who had agreed to make the pilgrimage together to the shrine of Canterbury usually and naturally met. Every citizen would have to come over London Bridge and pass through Southwark on his way to Canterbury. Southwark was close to the highway of the Thames, which brought pilgrims also from other villages and towns upon the river. It was out of High Street, Southwark, not far from the Tabard, that the Kent Road ran. Even at this day, of which some tell us that trade is the religion, it is in Southwark that the factors, to whom the hops are sent upon their pilgrimage from Canterbury and the other parts of Kent, find it convenient to establish their head-quarters. In the humbler inns the poorer pilgrims would collect, many of them to be dependent on the dole of bread and the occasional night's shelter given by the Church in wayside chapels and halting-places that had been erected for their use. But from the Tabard, where "the chambres and the stables weren wyde," it was natural to see issuing a party of some thirty fellow-travellers on horseback. The name of the Tabard was transformed into the Talbot,² after

¹ Cobbett's 'State Trials' (London, 1809), vol. i. pp. 201, 2.

² The Talbot was a sort of hunting-dog between a hound and beagle. The origin of Tabards will be told when we come to the Ploughman's Tabard, p. 302.

the inn or the greater part of it had been burnt down by the fire of Southwark in 1676. But a pilgrims' room was shown in a part of the building which had not been burnt, and which, although not of older date than the reign of Elizabeth, some liked to believe as old as the reign of Richard II. It had been remodelled by a staircase which cut the large "pilgrims' room" into two smaller ones. For ninety years after the rebuilding of this inn, the sign of the Talbot was hanging from a beam laid across two uprights in the street in front of the inn-door, and on the cross-beam was inscribed, "This is the Inne where Sir Jeffry Chaucer and the nine and twenty Pilgrims lay in their journey to Canterbury, anno 1383." The inscription was not ancient, and the date in it, doubtless, had no better authority than a shrewd guess. The sign and its supports were condemned as a street obstruction and removed in 1766. In 1866, the inn itself is condemned and about to be swept away to make room for a pile of warehouses.

Chaucer represents his Pilgrims as starting from the Tabard on a day in early spring. Partly he does so, because then roads became more passable than they had been during the winter, and, the fresh season inviting men out of doors, "then longen folk to gon on pilgrimages." In our day the like longing becomes valid at another season, when we make our autumn pilgrimages to the seaside or beyond the sea. Partly the poet chose to tell of an April or May pilgrimage, because this reasonable choice of the season harmonized with the fashion of the fourteenth century, which made it second nature in the poet to begin a story with an April shower or a ray of the May sunshine, a rhyme to flower, and a reference to melody of birds and pairing time. A particular date is given in a later verse, the twenty-eighth of April, which answers to our seventh of May.

Chaucer says that he was at the Tabard, ready to make his own pilgrimage to Becket's shrine, when nine and twenty pilgrims arrived at night, to be easily lodged in the great hostelry. Early next morning these were to ride on to Canterbury. The poet made friends with each one, and joined their party. That made its number thirty; and when Harry Bailly, the host of the Tabard, also made himself of their company, the number became thirty-one. The list given by

Chaucer contains thirty-one people, including himself, but without reckoning the host. Mr. Tyrwhitt thought that the error lay in the number of the nun's "three priests;" but the word three is necessary to the rhyme; and to one of them, as well as to the second nun, who is named with them, Chaucer has given a story, though no Prologue definitely binds her to it. We must be content to know that Chaucer died with his work incomplete, and not much more of its order settled than that on the way to Canterbury the first four tales were to be those of the Knight, Miller, Reeve, and Cook; the last two those of the Manciple and Parson. As he proceeded with the story-telling, he probably was modifying, to suit the development of his plan, several of the first-written details of his Prologue.

As it stands in the text left to us, this is Chaucer's muster-roll of

The Canterbury Pilgrims.

1, 2, 3. A knight, his son, and an attendant yeoman.

The KNIGHT, a worthy man, who always had loved chivalry, truth, honour, freedom, and courtesy; a veteran who had fought in fifteen mortal battles, but was wise as he was worthy,

"And of his port as meke as is a mayde.
He never yit no vilonye ne sayde
In al his lyf, unto no maner wight.
He was a verray perfight gentil knight."

The knight's horse was good, but not gay; and he, in holiday trim, had a short cassock of fustian, and his coat-of-mail showing the soil of service.

His son was his SQUIRE, a lusty, curly-headed, well-grown lover and bachelor of twenty, nimble and strong, who, for hope to stand in his lady's grace, had borne him well in Flanders, and Artois, and Picardy. He was fresh as May; wore a short gown with long sleeves, embroidered like a meadow, white and red; sat his horse well; was singing or fluting all the day; could sing, dance, draw, write, and was hot in love. Withal

"Curteis he was, lowly and servisable,
And carf before his fader at the table."

The knight had with him no other servants than a YEOMAN (the word is from *gemæne*, common, answering to the German *gemeiner*, commoner), who was a nut-headed, brown-faced forester in coat and hood of green, with a mighty bow in his hand, and a sheaf of peacock-arrows under his belt. He wore a gay bracer or arm-shield; had sword and buckler on one side, and sharp dagger on the other; carried a horn, and wore a silver Christopher upon his breast, to save him from mortal hurt in the woods. It was a part of mediæval faith, that he who had seen an image of St. Christopher was safe against sudden or accidental death; for which reason images of St. Christopher, with the infant Jesus on his

shoulders, set up at church and cathedral doors, were made of colossal size that they might be seen the more easily.

4, 5, 6, 7, 8. A Prioress; another nun, who was her chaplain; and three Priests.

Madame Englentyne, the PRIORESS, was simple, smiling, and coy. She entuned the service divinely in her nose, and spoke neat French, after the school of Stratford-at-Bow, for French of Paris was to her unknown. She was seemly in reaching to her meat, and did not thrust her fingers deep into the sauce, or let any drop fall from her lips upon her breast. She wiped her upper lip so clean, that after she had drunk there was no grease in the cup. Lively, pleasant, and amiable, she gave herself trouble to counterfeit court manners and be stately, "and to ben holden digne of reverence." She was so tender-hearted that she would weep if she saw a mouse hurt in a trap. She had pet dogs that she fed with roast-meat, milk, and cake-bread; and wept sore if one died or was struck sharply. She had a soft, red little mouth, grey eyes, and a broad, fair forehead. The nun's wimple about her neck was neatly plaited; her cloak was neat; and about her arm she bore a pair of small coral beads in green gauds, whence hung a bright gold brooch,

"On whiche was first i-written a crowned A,
And after, *Amor vincit omnia*."

True still to the life of many of the gentlest of unmarried women are the prim little delicacies and dignities that, as in Chaucer's Prioress, are the transparent veil over a character all cheerful, tender, and affectionate.

The SECOND NUN who attended Madame Englentyne is only described as the Prioress's chaplain; and of the THREE PRIESTS, one who told a story—"this sweetë prest, this goodly man Sir Johan"—had a merry heart, although he rode upon a foul, lean jade. He was brown and brawny, with a great neck, large chest, and eyes like a sparrowhawk.

9, 10. A Monk and a Friar. The MONK, "a manly man to ben an Abbot able;" a man, said the host, of brawns and of bones, who should have a wife, and be the father of strong sons. He loved hunting, and had many a horse in stable. Where he kept cell, the jingling of his bridle might be heard in a whistling wind as clear and loud as the chapel bell. He cared for no text that said hunters were not holy men, or that a monk out of rules was a fish out of water. He had greyhounds swift as birds, and it was all his delight to hunt the hare. His sleeves were trimmed at the wrist with finest miniver; his boots were supple; a curious gold pin, with a love-knot at its head, fastened his hood under his chin. His bald head shone like glass, and his face as if anointed; for "he was a lord ful fat and in good poynt;" his eyes rolled deep in a head that steamed like a lead-furnace. He loved a fat swan best of any roast; and the brown palfrey he rode was in the best condition.

Hubert the FRIAR was a Limitour, one licensed to hear confessions and perform offices of the Church within a certain district, wanton and merry, a full festive¹ man. He had married many a young woman at his own

¹ Here 'solempne' does not mean in the modern sense solemn, but festive. In the Promptorium Parvulorum we have this distinction made: 'Solemne, solempnis.' 'Solempne or feestfulle, festivus, celebr.'

cost ; was a friend with all the country gentlemen of his district, and also with worthy women of the town ; for he had, as he said, more power of confession than a curate, being licentiate of his order. He heard confession sweetly, gave pleasant absolution and easy penance where he knew that he should have good pittance, gifts to the poor friars being a sure sign of repentance. His tippet was stuffed full of knives and pins for gifts to the fair wives. He could excel in song, and play the rote (an old wheeled instrument, probably like a hurdy-gurdy) ; had a neck white as a lily ; was withal strong as a champion, and knew all the innkeepers and tapsters better than the lepers and beggars, who were no acquaintances for such a worthy man as he. It was no gain to deal with such poor creatures, but only with the rich, and those who sold victuals. Where profit might arise, he was courteous and low of service ; there was no man so virtuous. He was the best beggar in his house, and farmed his district, paying that none of his brethren should come in his haunt. If a widow had but one shoe, he would have a farthing of her before he left. His purchase was better than his rent. He could rage and play, too, like a whelp ; and helped at love-days (arbitration-meetings), not like a poor cloisterer, but like a master or a pope. His semicope, round as a bell, was of double worsted. He lisped a little for wantonness, to make his English sweet upon the tongue ; and in his harping, when he had sung, his eyes twinkled in his head as the stars do in the frosty night.

11. A MERCHANT, with forked beard, who sat high on horse, in motley, with a Flaundrish beaver hat upon his head, and boots clasped neatly. He talked festively, noising always the increase of his winnings ; wished the sea were guarded between Middleburgh and Orwell ; could sell French crowns well in exchange ; and managed his bargainings and borrowings so well that no man knew he was in debt. He swore by St. Thomas of Inde ; and had been two months wedded to a shrew.

12. A CLERK of Oxford, who had much studied logic, and in his customary travelling to foreign universities had talked with Petrarch at Padua. He rode a lean horse, and was a hollow, sober-looking man ; threadbare, for he had got no benefice, and was not worldly enough for other office. He would rather have twenty books of Aristotle and his philosophy at his bed's head, clothed in black or red, than rich robes for himself, fiddle, or sautrie. Though a philosopher, he had but little gold in coffer ; but all that he had of his friends he spent on books and learning, and prayed busily for the souls of those who gave him wherewith to attend the schools.

“ Of studië tooke he most care and heede.
 Not oo word spak he morè than was neede ;
 All that he spak it was of heye prudence,
 And schort, and quyk, and ful of gret sentence.
 Sownynge in moral manere was his speche,
 And gladly wolde he lerne, and gladly teche.”

This picture, touched so tenderly, of the poor wise man in his threadbare cloak, who “lokede holowe,” and rode on a horse lean as a rake, has its own charm intensified by contrast with the preceding descriptions of the fat hare-hunting monk, in his miniver-sleeves, and with his stud

of dainty horses; of the pleasant friar, lipping for wantonness, who knew more of the fair wives and tapsters than of the sick and poor, and farmed his district for the good of his own flesh; and of the merchant, whose whole boast is of his money and his gains, while much of his skill lies in keeping his debts secret.

13. A SERGEANT-AT-LAW, wary and wise, who had often resorted with his craft to the Parvis or Paradise at the porch of St. Paul's. He was discreet and in great reverence, and seemed so wise that he had been often justice in assize. His science and renown had brought him fees and many robes. He was a great purchaser, and all his purchases were safe in fee simple.

“Nowher so besy a man as he ther n'as,
And yet he semed besier than he was.”

He could cite all cases and judgments from King William's time, had all the statutes by heart, and could indite faultlessly. He rode but homely, in a medley coat (that is, a coat of mixed colour, or as we might now say, Oxford 'mixture'), with a barred silk girdle.

14. A FRANKLIN—that is, a landholder free of feudal service or payment, whose tenure is immediately from the king. The Franklin of this Pilgrimage was a ruddy man with a beard white as a daisy—an own son of Epicurus, who loved sop in wine of mornings. He, living in delight, kept open house. “Seynt Julian he was in his countré”—that is, not the St. Julian who suffered martyrdom in Auvergne, under Diocletian; nor St. Julian of the third century, apostle of the Maine; nor St. Julian of the seventh century, who was Archbishop of Toledo; but the mediæval storyteller's Julian of the ‘Gesta Romanorum,’ who, after he had fulfilled unwittingly the prophecy of a stag who, when he was hunting it, turned to him and said, “You will kill your father and mother,” founded, together with his wife, a magnificent house for the accommodation of travellers, and so became “St. Julian, the gode herberjour.” “I always,” says the merchant Rinaldo, in one of Boccaccio's stories (Day II., Novel 2), “when I am upon a journey, before I go out of mine inn, say one Pater-Noster and one Ave-Maria for the souls of the father and mother of St. Julian, and after that I pray to God and St. Julian to send me a good lodging at night.” No man kept a better cellar than this Franklin, and “it snewed in his hous of mete and drynke.” He changed his dainties with the season, at dinner and at supper; and woe be to his cook if his sauce were not “poynant and scharp, and redy al his gere.” At sessions he was lord and sire. He had been a sheriff and a counter, and he carried a dirk and a milk-white purse at his girdle.

15, 16, 17, 18, 19. A HABERDASHER, a CARPENTER, a WEAVER, a DYER, and a TAPESTRY-MAKER, went all in the livery of one great fraternity, in new gear, each, with not brass but silver fittings to knife, girdle, and pouch, seeming a fair burgess to sit on the dais in a guild hall. Every one was on his way to be an alderman; for they had goods and rent enough, and their wives were willing; else they were to blame, for it is well to be called madam, precede all in going to church, and have a mantle carried royally.

20. Roger, or Hodge, of Ware, a London Cook, went with the party,

for the nonce, to boil their chickens and their marrow-bones. From Host Harry Bailly's jesting with him we learn that he kept a shop. He could roast, seethe, boil, fry, stew, and make pies—

“And many a Jakh of Dover hastow sold,
That hath be twyes hoot and twyes cold.”

It was a pity that he had a gangrene on his shin, for he could make blanchmanges (some compound of pounded capon, with cream, sugar, and flour) with the best. Well could he know also a draught of London ale. Indeed the cook was the only man, except the miller, who got absolutely drunk upon the way. The pardoner had enough to make him communicative. The miller had enough to make him rampant. But the cook was dead drunk by the time they had reached Boughton-under-Blee.

21. A SAILOR from the West Country, perhaps of Dartmouth, a good fellow, brown with summer heat, rode as well as he could upon a common hack, and wore a frieze gown to the knee. A dagger, lashed round his neck, hung under his arm. He had drawn many a draught of wine from Bordeaux-ward while the trader slept. He knew every creek in Brittany and Spain; had no nice conscience; if he fought, and had the upper hand, he sent home his wine by water to every land. From Hull to Carthage there was none so skilled in reckoning moon, tides, harbour, and pilotage. His beard had been shaken in many a tempest.

22. A DOCTOR OF PHYSIC: none like him to speak of physic and surgery; for he was grounded in astronomy, and could prolong life by his natural magic, making for his patients images (as the stamp of the ram for diseases of the head, and so forth) when their stars were in the ascendant. He knew the cause of every malady, whether cold or hot, or moist or dry, where engendered, and of what humour.¹ He had his apothecaries to vend his drugs and electuaries, “for eche of hem made othur for to wyne.” He knew his books, from Æsculapius to “Bernard, and Gatisden, and Gilbertyn.” He was moderate in diet, taking what was most nourishing and digestible. His study was but little in the Bible. He was dressed in crimson and blue, lined with taffeta and silk; but he spent little of what he won in the pestilence, for gold, in physic, is a cordial, wherefore he loved it specially.

23. Alisoun, a WIFE OF BATH, some part deaf, which was pity; a most

¹ Medical practice did not improve much within the next two centuries, and Cardan's diagnosis in 1552 of the case of asthmatic Archbishop Hamilton, which even included the astrology, might have been made by Chaucer's Doctor of Physic. “He believed that the thin fluid expectorated was partly serous humour, partly condensed vapour, which descended from the brain into the lungs, not through the cavity of the windpipe,—for if so it would be coughed out during its downward passage,—but through its coats, as water soaks through linen. This thin humour and vapour he supposed to be originally drawn into the brain by the increased rarity in the substance of that organ, caused by undue heat. Heat makes all things rare; and rarefaction in one part of the body, to express the idea roughly, produces suction from another.” ‘Life of Cardan,’ vol. ii. p. 114. Even in Molière's time such doctrine was not obsolete, witness Act ii. sc. 6 of ‘Le Médecin malgré Lui.’

skilful clothmaker (Bath was famous of old for its cloth-trade), and wroth was she if any wife in the parish went before her to the offering at mass. The fine coverchiefs she wore on her head on Sunday weighed a pound, her scarlet hose were tied up tight, her shoes were new, bold was her face, and fair and red of hue. She thanked God that since she was twelve years old she had five husbands at the church door (where, in the old marriage-service, the couple stood during the earlier part of the ceremony), had been faithful to each, was ready to welcome the sixth when her fifth should die, and, as a pilgrim, had been thrice to Jerusalem, to Rome, to Bologna,¹ to the shrine of St. James at Compostella, and to that of the three kings—the Wife of Bath would hardly have set out for the shrine of the eleven thousand virgins—at Cologne. She had prominent teeth,² and that, she said, became her well; sat easily upon an ambler, well wimpled about the neck, with a hat broad as a buckler, a foot-mantle about her large hips, and a pair of sharp spurs on her feet. She could laugh well in fellowship, and tell, as an expert, of remedies of love. Saint Paul, she said, counselled virginity, but God bade man increase and multiply. Holy virginity is great perfection, but Christ, the fountain of perfection, bade not every one go sell all that he had. She chose another part. It was not for no reason that God made us male and female. Our Lord and many of the saints lived ever in perfect chastity. She honoured holy virgins—

“Let hem be bred of purëd whetë seed,
And let us wyvës eten barley breed.
And yet with barly bred, men tellë can
Oure Lord Jhesù refreisschide many a man.”

¹ The foundation in 1390 of the magnificent Basilica of St. Petronius, the local saint, which was planned on a scale beyond that of St. Peter, must have caused in and after that year special effort to attract to Bologna the offerings of pilgrims, and the mention of that place of pilgrimage in connection with Jerusalem, Rome, and Santiago de Compostella may, perhaps, be taken as a small indication of the fact, sufficiently established upon other grounds, that Chaucer wrote the Prologue and Introductions to the Canterbury Tales within the two or three years preceding his death in 1400, and hardly earlier than 1396.

² ‘Gat-toothed was she.’ Tyrwhitt gave up this word, which has been read in so many ways that I am sorry to be obliged to add another. Mr. Wedgwood (‘Etymological Dictionary,’ vol. ii.) believes ‘gat’ to be allied to the N. ‘glisa,’ to shine through, and to mean open in texture, thinly scattered, so as to allow the light to shine through, and allies the word to G. ‘glatt,’ shining, and ‘gatter,’ a lattice.—‘Geat,’ which in modern Dutch is ‘gat,’ was A. S. for an opening; ‘gash-gabbit,’ where ‘gab’ means mouth, is a north country phrase for having a projecting under jaw (Brown’s ‘Dictionary of the Scottish Language’); and ‘gat-toothed’ meant, I believe, that the two rows of teeth did not meet when the mouth was closed, but left a ‘gat’ or ‘gash’ between, because one of the rows projected. Such a peculiarity, allied by Chaucer to the colt’s tooth, that proverbially suggested fleshly appetite, has shrewd relation to the rest of the picture of the Wife of Bath, and, if not excessive, does seem to become some faces in which it occurs.

Of her five husbands, the first three were good men, and rich and old, and she gossiped at length jestingly about the way she ruled them :

“ But that I pray to al this companye,
If that I speke after my fantasie
As taketh nought agreef of that I say,
For myn entente is nought but for to play.”

Her fourth husband was a reveller, who was unfaithful to her; and without loss of her own honesty, she made him fry in his own grease for wrath and very jealousy. He died when she came back from Jerusalem, and lies under the rood-beam. His tomb is not so curious as the sepulchre of Darius that Apelles wrought. It is but waste to bury them preciously. Her fifth husband was Jankin, a jolly clerk of Oxford, who lodged, in the lifetime of his predecessor, with her gossip Alisoun; and she told him, in some Lenten holiday time, that if she were a widow he should wed her. She liked, in holiday time, to see and be seen, wherefore she went to marriages, miracle-plays, and to these pilgrimages, and wore her scarlet gowns. Moth did not corrupt her raiment, and why? because it was well used. When her fourth husband was buried, she thought what a clean pair of legs Jankin had as he followed the bier. He was twenty, and she forty; but in a month she married him, and gave him all the land and fee left to her by the husbands that were gone. But he checked her gadding, and struck her with his fist because she tore a leaf out of his book, “that of that strok myn eerë wax al deef.” So the Wife of Bath came by her deafness. The leaf she had torn out was from a book in which he had many works bound together, and out of which he amused his leisure in reading stories about wicked wives. Clerks in their oratories never can write well of women; but if the women had the writing of the books, the stories would be different. Jankin one night was reading by the fire how Eve began by bringing all mankind to wretchedness, how Samson was shorn, of Dejanira, Xantippe, and many others, and therewithal quoted proverbs against women. She chafed, till suddenly she tore three leaves out of the book, and took him with her fist upon his cheek, so that he fell backward in the fire. He started up, like a wild lion, and struck her on the head. She lay as dead. He was aghast, and would have fled away. She woke from her swoon, complained, and asked to kiss her murderer before she died. When he put down his cheek, she bit him, and said, “Thief, thus much I am awreek.” But after this battle a lasting peace was made. Jankin, the clerk, burnt his book, and gave the sovereignty to his own true wife :

“ After that day we never had debate,
God help me so, I was to him as kynde
As eny wyf fro Denmark unto Indë,
And al so trewë was he unto me,
I pray to God that sit in magesté,
So blesse his sowlë, for his mercy deere.”

Out of Shakespeare there is no character-painting in our literature to be compared to Chaucer's. Only the mind able to conceive an Imogen could win the world to study and enjoyment of a Falstaff. We have

found in Chaucer the one poet of his time who recognised the inner loveliness of womanhood, and saw with reverence the spiritual side of marriage. Therefore, when he also, in completing that reflection of the life of man which a great poet sees in its wholeness, turns to its animal side, and paints marriage according to the flesh with the directness of speech that his age permitted, there can be none too really good to have a liking for the laughter of his Wife of Bath.

24, 25. Two brothers, a poor TOWN PARSON and a PLOUGHMAN; the relationship being suggested by the better spirit of the day embodied in the Vision of Piers Plowman. This parson, the ploughman's brother, though poor, was rich of holy thought and work—a learned man, who preached Christ's gospel truly, taught his parishioners devoutly, was benign, and wonderfully diligent and patient in adversity. He was loth to curse for his tithes; would rather give of his offerings, or even of his substance, to the poor parishioners about him. Little sufficed for him. His parish was wide, the houses far asunder, but in all weathers he was ready to go to the sick or sorry to the farthest in his parish, great and small,

“Upon his feet, and in his hand a staf.
This noble ensample unto his scheep he yaf,
That ferst he wroughte, and after that he taughte,
Out of the gospel he the wordës caughte,
And this figure he addid yet therto,
That if gold rustë, what schulde yren do.”

He did not set his benefice to hire, and run to London, to St. Paul's,

“To seeken him a chaunterie for soules
Or with a brethurhedë be withholde;
But dwelte at hoom, and keptë wel his folde,
So that the wolf ne made it not miscarye.
He was a schepperde and no mercenarie;
And though he holy were, and vertuous,
He was to senful man nought despitous.”

His business was, by good example, to draw folks to him. He could rebuke sharply, on occasion, high or low, where obstinacy called for his rebuke:

“He waytud after no pomp ne reverence,
Ne makëd him a spicëd conscience,
But Cristës lore, and his apostles twelve,
He taught, and ferst he folwed it himselve.”

Chaucer's ideal here agrees with Gower's; and throughout the 'Canterbury Tales' his satire—on occasion, too, his utter scorn—is against men wearing a religious habit whose lives are one battle against the maintenance of this high standard of duty, and who quench the divine spirit in avarice and sensuality. It is not, we may observe also, by accident that this fittest representative of spiritual life rides next in the procession to the Wife of Bath.

The PLOUGHMAN, his brother, who had laid many a load of dung, was a true and good labourer, living in peace and perfect charity. He loved God with his whole heart, and his neighbour as himself. For Christ's

sake he would, if he could, thresh, dyke, and delve for the poor without hire. He paid good tithes of his labour and goods. In a tabard, he rode upon a mare. The ploughman's tabard was the ancient dress of labour. Tabard (Italian 'tabarro'), simply means overcoat. It was a short sleeveless overcoat, such as was worn among the followers of Turnus, who despised the use of sleeves to their tunics, by the followers of Æneas.¹ The early Romans contemned the use of sleeves. Tacitus records that they were not used by the Germans. The short sleeveless coat, that left the legs and arms free for their labour, was worn in earlier time by monks and hermits; and, though glorified with emblazonment when worn over the armour of a knight, it was the old dress proper to the labourer upon the soil, in Chaucer's time a fit badge of the ploughman.

26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31.

"Ther was also a Reeve and a Mellere
A Sompnour and a Pardoner also,
A Maunciple, and my-self, ther was no mo."

Robin the MILLER was a stout carl, brawny and bony, who bore away the ram at wrestlings. Short-shouldered, broad, thick-knobbed, there was no door that he would not lift from its bar, or break by running at with his head. His beard was red as a fox's, and broad as a spade. On the top of his nose he had a wart with a tuft of hair on it red as the bristles in a sow's ears. His nostrils were black and wide, his mouth wide as a furnace. He had a sword and buckler by his side, was a jangler and a galliard,² "and that was most of sinne and harlotries." He had a wife in whom he put no trust. He could steal corn, and take toll of it thrice, and yet passed for the honest miller with a thumb of gold. He wore a white coat and blue hood :

"A baggë pipë cowde he blowe and soune,
And therwithal he brought us out of towne."

So that these also were of the Canterbury Pilgrims, of whom William Thorpe complained, that "they will have with them bagpipes;" and in defence of whose bagpipes Archbishop Arundel spoke as if they were a customary part of a pilgrim's complete outfit.

The MANCIPLE derives his name from 'mancepo,' as a purchaser of what can be taken in the hand, and has the name in its literal sense as buyer of victual for a corporation. Chaucer's pilgrim was manciple of an Inn of Court, a Temple, and an example to all buyers of victual; for, whether he paid or scored, he always turned his buying to his gain. His unlearned wit passed the wisdom of a heap of learned men. He had more than thirty masters, expert and curious in the law, a dozen of them worthy to be stewards who should enable any reasonable lord in England to live within his means, or help a shire in any case that might befall, yet they were all fools to this manciple.

¹ Et tunicae manicas, et habent redimicula mitræ. Virg. Æn. ix. 616. Latin for 'tabard,' in the 'Promptorium Parvulorum' (of about A.D. 1440), is 'colobium,' Greek *κολόβιον*, which means a short coat without sleeves.

² See vol. i. p. 586.

A REEVE was a lord's servant, as steward or overseer. 'Reaf,' the Anglo-Saxon word, meant both tax-gatherer and robber, and made adjectives and compounds with a sense of rapine in them. Oswald, the Reeve of this Pilgrimage, was a slender, choleric man, close shaven, with his hair shorn round by the ears, and his top docked in front like a priest's. He had long lean legs like sticks, with no calf to them. He knew well how to keep garner and bin. No auditor could get the better of him. He knew how to judge the yield of harvest by the drought and rain. His lord's estate was wholly in his keeping, and he had given account of it since his lord was twenty years of age. No man could prove arrears against him. There was no bailiff, herdsman, or other hind who knew his hidden tricks. They were afraid of him as of the death. He lived on a heath, in a fair house sheltered by trees, was better able to buy than his lord:

"Ful riche he was i-stored prively
His lord wel couthe he plesë subtilly,
To yeve and lene him of his ownë good,
And have a thank, a cote, and eke an hood."

He had learnt a good trade in his youth, and was a clever carpenter. He came from near Bawdeswell,¹ in Norfolk; rode a right good dapple-grey horse, called Scot (which is to this day a very common name for a horse in Norfolk²); was tucked about as a friar, and always rode last in the company.

The SOMPNOUR, or Summoner of delinquents to the Ecclesiastical Courts, had a fire-red cherubim-face, for he was scorbutic. He had narrow eyes, black scabby brows, scalled beard. Children were sore afraid of his face; there was no medicine or ointment that would clear him of his white pustules,³ or the knobs upon his cheek. He was hot and lecherous as a sparrow, loved garlic, onion, and leeks, and strong red wine. When he had drunk well, he would cry as if he were mad, and speak no word but Latin. He knew two or three terms that he had learnt out of some decree. No wonder. He heard Latin all the day, and a jay can cry "Wat" as well as the Pope. If one sounded him farther, he had spent all his philosophy, "*Questio: Quid juris? What says the law?*" was his cry. He would let a man have a twelvemonth's fornication for a quart of wine, and excuse him fully. "And pryvely a fynch eek cowde he pulle;" or, as we now say, he could pluck a pigeon. If he found a good fellow anywhere, he bade him have no fear of the archdeacon's

¹ Bawdeswell, spelt in the text Baldeswell, is a Norfolk village, now of about six hundred inhabitants, seven miles from East Dereham. The intersection of roads shows that Bawdeswell has been a place of more consequence than any other between Fakenham or East Dereham and Norwich.

² So says Mr. Robert Bell, whose cheap annotated edition of the works of Chaucer is the one from which a beginner will get readiest help to a right understanding of the poet. "To this day," says Mr. Bell, "there is scarcely a farm in Norfolk or Suffolk in which one of the horses is not called Scot. As the name has no meaning, it must be attributed to an immemorial tradition."

³ "Whele or welke, soore:—Pustula." *Promptorium Parvulorum*.

curse unless his soul were in his purse; for Purse, he said, is the arch-deacon's hell. But he lied, adds Chaucer. Let the guilty man take heed, "for curs wol slee right as assoillyng saveth." The Summoner was of the counsel of all the young girls of the diocese. He wore on his head a garland great enough for an alestake, and of a cake had made himself a buckler.

There rode with him a PARDONER, of Roncevelles, his friend and compeer, come straight from Rome, who sang full loud, "Come hither, love, to me." The Summoner sang the burden with him stiffly, was never trump with half so great a sound. The Pardoner had smooth, yellow, flaxen hair that hung thinly in locks, and overspread his shoulders. His hood, for jollity, he had put off and trussed up in his wallet. He rode bare and dishevelled, save his cap, on which a vernicle, a little copy of the miraculous transfer of the face of Christ to the handkerchief of St. Veronica, was fastened. He had eyes glaring like a hare's, and his wallet on his lap before him "bret-ful of pardoun come from Rome all hoot." He had a small voice like a goat's, no beard, nor ever would have one. But of his craft, from Berwick to Ware there was not such another Pardoner. He had in his pack a pillow-case that he said was Our Lady's veil. He said that he had a morsel of the sail St. Peter had when he went on the sea before Christ called him. He had a brass cross full of stones, and a bottle of pigs' bones, with which he could get out of a poor country parson more money in one day than the parson could earn in two months. In church the Pardoner was a noble ecclesiastic, who could read a lesson well, but was at his best singing the offertory; for well he knew that after this he must preach and file his tongue to win what silver he could. When he preached in church, he took pains to be loud and clear as a bell. His theme was always the same, "Love of money is the root of all evil." First he told whence he came; then showed his bulls, his liege lord's seal and patent, that no man, priest or clerk, might be bold to disturb him. Then he told forth his tales, seasoning his preaching with a little Latin, and produced his long crystals full of clouts and bones, which all took to be relics. The water of wells in which this bone has been washed will heal your sheep and cattle, and the farmer who drinks of it in the morning fasting shall increase his store. The jealous man who drinks of it shall never again mistrust his wife. Whoever puts hand into this mitten shall have increase of his sowing, if he offer pence or groats. Those guilty of the worst sins may buy absolution. And thus the Pardoner has made his hundred marks a year, stretching his neck about from the pulpit over the sitting people, like a dove atop of a barn:

"Of avarice and of swiche cursednesse
Is al my preching, for to make hem free
To yeve hir pense, and namely unto me."

Those who displeased him he preached at, not naming, but clearly indicating them:

"Thus spit I out my venime under hue
Of holinesse, to seme holy and trewe."

He would not be poor, he would deny no appetite:

“I wol non of the Apostles contrefete :
 I wol have money, wollë, chese and whete,
 Al were it yeven of the pourest page,
 Or of the pourest widewe in a village :
 Al schulde hire children sterven for famine.”

Such is the Pardoner, the one character in the ‘Canterbury Tales’ that might appear to want dramatic truth in the presentment. It is absolute truth; but Chaucer, in his wrath at the base traffic of the foreign hypocrites who played on the religious feeling of the simple, puts his scorn of him into the Pardoner’s own mouth, making him delight in his own shame, and preface his tale by saying—

“For though myself be a ful vicious man,
 A moral tale yet I you tellen can.”

This Pardoner, with his wits clear, must know that such discourse, supposing that he had no other reason for restraint, was bad for trade. But Chaucer, too, knew that; and as he meant that the truth should come out of him, muddled his wits with ale. Said mine host to the Pardoner—

“Tel us som merth of japës right anon.
 It shal be don, quod he, by seint Ronion.
 But first (quod he) here at this ale-stake
 I wol both drinke and biten on a cake.”

Then it is cried out on him that he must tell no ribaldry :

“Tell us some moral thing, that we mow lere,
 Some wit, and thannë wol we gladly here.
 I graunt ywis, quod he, but I must thinke
 Upon som honest thing, while that I drink.”

And after he has drunk—truth being in ale as well as wine—such very honest truth comes out of him as this account of his own doings.

Chaucer describes himself, through Harry Bailly the host, as one who looked on the ground as he would find a hare; seemed elvish by his countenance, for he did unto no wight dalliance, yet was stout; for, says the host, “he in the wast is schape is as wel as I.”

These thirty-one were the pilgrims, but on the way they were overtaken at Boughton-under-Blean, seven miles on the London side of Canterbury, by a Canon’s ^{The Canon and his Yeoman.} yeoman and his master, who addressed them with great courtesy, the Yeoman saying that he had seen them in the morning leave their hostelry, and told his master, who rode after to join them, because, said the Yeoman at that first accost of the pilgrims, his master was full of mirth and

jollity. The Canon wore his white surplice under his black cloak and hood, and between his hood and his head had a burdock leaf for sweat, to keep his head from heat. He came in mad haste, on a dapple-grey hack, and "it semed he hadde prikēd mylēs thre." Here is a riddle; and, I think, an easy one, though hitherto unsolved. The Canon's yeoman says that he saw the pilgrims leaving their inn in the morning; they are overtaken seven miles from Canterbury, yet the Canon's ride is only estimated at three miles. In finishing his work, Chaucer might have been his own interpreter by telling explicitly what is, I think, clearly implied in his dramatic treatment of the character of the Canon. We presently find him to be a ragged, joyless alchemist, whose home is in a thieves' lane of a town suburb, and who makes no gold but what he can extract from men whom he persuades that he is able by his art to turn one gold piece into two. He and his hungry man have come, as a sort of thieves, to try so much of the alchemist's art upon some soft-headed member of this large and promising company of pilgrims. Their first greeting is hypocritical. The Yeoman's representation of his master's coming after them for his disport, because he loveth dalliance, and "can of mirth and eke of jollity not but enough," is, as we see presently, as round a lie as he could tell to serve his purpose. His next assertion is the beginning of the usual operation on credulity. The Yeoman informs the pilgrims that his master has such subtilty,

"That al this ground on which we ben ridynge
Til that we comen to Caunterbury toun,
He couthe al clenē turnen up so down,
And pave it al of silver and of gold."

Together with these two statements, which presently become manifest lies, and as a part of the attempt they represent to get on the blind side of a pilgrim or two, comes the Yeoman's assertion that he had seen the pilgrims ride out of their inn-yard that morning. This profession is not contradicted, any more than it is supported, by the subsequent confessions of the poor alchemist's man; but Chaucer himself has contradicted it, and shown clearly whence these people really came. His three-mile ride was not a purposeless suggestion. In the mature writing of Chaucer everything is significant. Just three miles from

Boughton-under-Blean, and in the rear of the pilgrims when they had got there, is Faversham, an ancient town, considerable enough in Chaucer's time to have its outskirt of lanes and blind-alleys. Faversham also might reasonably be said to have one of its canons living in an alley, for the abbey there, in which King Stephen lies buried, fell, soon after its foundation, into a grievous state of poverty. The high-road to Canterbury does not pass through Faversham. The town lies to the left, touching the road to Canterbury only by its outskirts. The clerical alchemist may have lived in an outskirt on that side of the town; or his man may have espied for him one of the richer companies of pilgrims, among whom he was in the habit of looking for some of the dupes who would help to feed his furnace and his belly too. The resources in that way of Faversham itself must have been easily exhausted. And so they arrayed themselves, saddled their horses, overtook the troop of pilgrims after a hot gallop of three miles, and rode up to them with fair greeting and false pretence. With excellent dramatic instinct, Chaucer represents the Yeoman's opening upon his game; his finding that the birds will not be caught; and, as the home-thrusts of Harry Bailly, the host, knock over his story and spoil his prospect of turning a penny, his rapid slide out of allegiance to his unprofitable master into a more promising state of fellowship with other folks who might do him some good. This Canon, said his yeoman, after other flourishing, could pave all their road to Canterbury with silver and gold. "I wonder, then," said Harry Bailly, "that your lord is so sluttish, if he can buy better clothes. His overslop is not worth a mite, it is all dirty and torn." The home-thrust at the poverty of which he knows the pinch, causes the Yeoman to begin his slide. This, although swift, is natural, and is characterised with Chaucer's genuine dramatic instinct:

"Why? quod this Yeman, wherto axe ye me?
God help me so, for he schal never the,
(But I wol nought avowè that I say,
And therfor kep it secré I you pray)
He is to wys in faith, as I bileve.
That that is over-don, it wil nought preve
Aright, as clerkès sein, it is a vice;
Wherefore in that I holde him lewede and nyce.

For whan a man hath over-greet a witte,
 Ful ofte him happeth to mysusen itte;
 So doth my lord, and that me greveth sore."

Presently the Host asked, "Wher dwellen ye, if it to tellen be?"
 In the suburbs of a town, said the Yeoman, lurking in corners
 and blind lanes,

"Wher as these robbours and these theves by kynde
 Holden here privé ferful residence,
 As they that dor nought schewen hir presence;
 So faren we, if I schal say the sothe."

"Why," asked the Host again, "is your face so discoloured?"
 "That is with constant blowing in the fire. We blunder ever,
 and pore in the fire; and for all that we fail of our desire. We
 borrow gold of men who think that of a pound we can make
 two.

"Yit is it fals; and ay we han good hope
 It for to doon, and after it we grope."

The Canon, who had drawn near, suspicious of the conversation,
 overheard his yeoman, and cried at him as a slanderer, who was
 discovering what he should hide. The Host bade the Yeoman
 tell on, and not mind his master. The Yeoman said that he did
 not mind him. The Canon fled away for very sorrow and shame;
 upon which his Yeoman said he was glad to be quit of him, for
 he had dwelt with him seven years, and lost all that he had, yet
 never until now had he been able to leave him. Hereupon the
 Yeoman, before telling a tale, speaks his mind at length con-
 cerning his experience of alchemy.

Harry Bailly, also called Henry Bailif, the host, was fit to
 be the marshal in a hall—large, deep-eyed, bold of
 speech, shrewd, manly, well-informed. He had a big-
 armed, blabbing shrew for his wife, who brought him the
 great clubbed staves when he beat his boys, and cried, "Slay
 the dogs every one, and break them back and bone." She
 ramped in his face, and cried at him as a milksop who would
 not avenge her, if any neighbour failed to bow to her in church;
 and he must bear with her, unless he would fight her, which
 he dared not do. Some day she would be driving him, he said,
 to slay a neighbour, and then go his way, for he is dangerous
 with knife in hand. No wonder that the Host was ready for

a pilgrimage to Canterbury, while his wife stayed by the Tabard. He gave his guests good supper and strong wine, and after supper jested merrily, when they had paid their reckonings. ^{The Compact.} It was the best company of pilgrims that had been at his inn that year, he said, and he should like to secure them mirth upon their way; for—

“ Wel I woot, as ye gon by the weye,
 Ye schapen yow to talken and to pleye;
 For trewely comfort ne merthe is noon
 To rydë by the weye domb as a stoon.”

They were all ready for his counsel; and it was, that each of them should tell two tales on the way to Canterbury, and two other tales on the way home. The one whose tales proved to be “of best sentence and of solas” should have a supper in that room at the cost of all when they came back from Canterbury. There was an eye here to future reckonings. The Host would be paid for the holiday he meant to take when offering to ride with the pilgrims at his own cost. He was to be their guide; and whoever gainsaid his judgment was to pay for all they spent upon the way. All agreed, and appointed the Host governor, judge, and reporter of the tales. Then wine was fetched, they drank, and went to bed.

The Host roused them next morning when the day began to spring—at dawn; for it is evident, from the indications given in the prologues to some of the tales, that <sup>On the Road.
The Tales.</sup> the sixty-four miles from Southwark to Canterbury were to be travelled before night. The length of the day from sunrise to sunset at the time of the pilgrimage is a few minutes more than fifteen hours. So at easy pace, with sufficient halts for rest and food, perhaps taking fresh horses once upon the road, and recovering their own on the return journey, the riders could easily complete in a spring day their journey on a road so well kept and furnished as the route of pilgrims between London and St. Thomas à Becket’s shrine. The exact date of Chaucer’s pilgrimage is given in the prologue to the Man of Law’s tale. It is the 28th of April. The difference of styles at the close of the fourteenth century was nine days;¹ the date, therefore, was that now called the 7th of May, when the sun

¹ It is at present twelve days.

rises at 4 h. 24 m. and sets at 7 h. 30 m. There is authority of MS. for another date, the 18th instead of the 28th of April. That would make the day of pilgrimage our 27th of April, when the time between sunrise and sunset is thirty-five minutes shorter than on the 7th of May. The party rose at dawn and rode slowly to "the watering of St. Thomas"—that is to say, of the Hospital of St. Thomas the Martyr, in Southwark, which may be called, in the series of Church stations, the London terminus of the line of pilgrimage to St. Thomas the Martyr's shrine at Canterbury. Here the Host reminded his companions of their undertaking; and all, at his bidding, including the lady prioress and the studious, bashful clerk, drew out slips by way of lot. Whoever had the shortest should begin. This wholesome device excluded all questions of precedence of rank among the fellow-pilgrims. The lot fell to the Knight, whereat all were glad; and, with the courtesy of prompt assent, he began:

The *Knight's Tale* of Palemon and Arcite. This is Chaucer's version of Boccaccio's 'Teseide,' which he had made before he wrote 'The Legend of Good Women.' Four lines are introduced near the beginning to connect it with the prologue. Chaucer had said that of Theseus wedded to Ipolita, and of his return to Athens with her and her young sister Emelie, and "how wonnen was the regne of Femenie," and such matter, he will not tell, because the rest of his tale is long enough. He interpolates,—

"I wol not lette eek non of al this route.
Lat every felowe telle his tale aboute,
And let see now who schal the soper wynne.
And ther I lafte I wolde agayn begynne."

The matter passed over by Chaucer occupies the first two books of the 'Teseide,' at the end of which Theseus brings home Palemon and Arcite, who had been found wounded almost to death upon the battle-field, after his victory at Thebes, and imprisons them for life in the palace, with an outlook on a magnificent garden. Imprisoned Arcite sees Emilia walking in the garden, and calls his friend Palemon. Both fall in love with her, and Emilia sees their admiration without displeasure. Arcite is released, through the friendship of Pirithous, but is immediately to quit the kingdom upon pain of death. After serving Menelaus and Peleus, he returns disguised, by the name of Pantheo, to serve Theseus, and becomes known to Emilia. Pamphilo, servant of Palemon, overhears his complaint of love, declared under a tree in a wood to the winds and birds, and reports it to Palemon, who becomes jealous, and therefore desires to leave his prison and fight with his friend. Having escaped by changing clothes with a Theban physician, he finds Arcite in the wood. The friends, after long talk, towards dawn begin to fight, and are discovered

by Theseus and Emilia, who had come to the wood a hunting. Theseus is astonished at the handsome fellows who have both forfeited their lives for love, one by returning from banishment, the other by prison-breaking. He forgives them, and proposes a combat of a hundred to each side, the winner to marry Emilia. There is great sacrificing and preparation. Arcite prays to Mars, Palemon to Venus (it was on his way to the temple of Venus that he saw Cupid forging arrows by a well, in the passage Chaucer has already translated in the 'Court of Love'), and Emilia to Diana. They fight, and Palemon is taken prisoner; but a fury sent by Venus causes Arcite to be thrown from his horse and wounded. Arcite marries Emilia on a sick-bed, makes his will, bequeaths Emilia to Palemon, dies, goes to heaven, receives solemn funeral rites, and, after decent hesitations, Palemon and Emilia marry.

Boccaccio's 'Teseide' is in 9054 lines; Chaucer's 'Knight's Tale' in 2250. Chaucer's condensation has improved the tale; and his refinement appears in touches of his own that clear a delicate story of the occasional light tarnish from a warm Italian hand. Thus Boccaccio makes his Emilia hear the 'Oimè' of Palemon when he and Arcite first see her from their prison, makes her look up at the window, blush for shame, take in her flowers, think of that 'Oimè,' have a pleasant notion of its meaning, and resolve to adorn her beauty more when she goes next into the garden.¹ Chaucer omits this, and leaves "this fresshe Emelie" in purest innocence, unconscious of passion, as—

"In the gardyn at the sonne upriste
Sche walketh up and doun wher as hire liste.
Sche gadereth floures, party whyte and reede,
To make a sotil gerland for hire heede,
And as an aungel hevenly sche song."

Boccaccio had said even here, that "with angelic voice and light heart she sang beautiful verses always about love."

Again, when Theseus and his company upon their hunt find Palemon and Arcite fighting in the wood, and Palemon had disclosed his name, Chaucer adds to the picture the pity and tears of the women:

"The queen anon for verray wommanhode
Gan for to wepe, and so dede Emelye,
And alle the ladies in the companye."

He makes their pitying intercession move the heart of Theseus to mercy, and puts into the mouth of Theseus other humanizing touches of his own, in a man of the world's kindly half-amused view of the conduct of the lovers. These practical touches, never absent, do not weaken, they give bone and sinew to, the sentiment of Chaucer. Other changes were meant as improvements in the story. Palemon, not Arcite, is made the first to see and love Emilia, as it is he who finally possesses her; and the

¹ E piu se ne tien bella e piu s'adorna
Qual hora poscia a quel giardin ritorna.

Teseida, lib. iii. st. 19.

jealousy that is so essential a part of the story is made to spring with the love, instead of, as Boccaccio has it, arising suddenly in Palemon because his servant has heard Arcite, in a wood, telling the winds that he loves Emilia, as it was his custom to do in hot weather. The turn of the Italian story here was too artificial to please Chaucer, whose omission of the tell-tale Pamphilo, and change of Palemon's motive for escape, and for seeking Arcite, with other accordant changes, are all on the side of sense and manliness. The famous tale of friendship and love is in each character strengthened.

Chaucer sends Arcite into the wood with manly spirit. On a merry May morning—

“He on his courser, stertyng as the fire,
Is riden into feeldës him to pleye,
Out of the court, were it a mile or tweye.”

He chanced to go to the grove in which Palemon, escaped from prison, was hiding until night, when he might go on to Thebes and renew war against Theseus. Of Arcite, Chaucer says—

“And fro his courser, with a lusty herte
Into the grove ful lustily he sterte.”

and presently,

“Whan that Arcite hadde romëd al his fille,
And songen al the roundel lustily,
Into a studie he fel sodeynly
As doth thes lovers in here queyntë geeres,
Now in the croppë, now doun in the breeres.”

And so he came to the complaint which roused the ire of his friend Palemon, who chanced to overhear. But what a puling fellow is the Arcite of Boccaccio, who, in his love for Emilia, “did not dare to discover it to her, and hoped, and did not know in what, when he often felt great tortures. But to hide his amorous desires, and to let the sighs come out that made his soul too full of anguish, it was his custom to go quite alone to sleep in a thicket. It was his custom to do this in the hot weather, because the place was cool, and was so remote from the path of every one, that he could well let the fire of his love go out with his voice.” And the next incident is, that a lackey overhears the nocturnal puling, and on the repetition of it by that eavesdropper, Palemon is stirred with a jealous rage to break out of doors for the purpose of going into the wood to fight his friend. Here Boccaccio's lovers are not so much men as tom-cats. From Chaucer they get restoration of their manhood.

The Host, now that “unbokeled is the male,” calls on the pilgrims at his own discretion, and it is the Monk whom he asks for the next story. But the Miller is drunk, and with oaths and loud voice thrusts in his offer of what he declares to be a noble tale. As he will not be stopped, he is suffered to go on and does so, with the preface that he is drunk, and

Southwark ale is answerable if he speak amiss. So he proceeds with what Chaucer not only calls "his churlish tale," but takes unusual pains to set in its right light. The poet is giving a dramatic sketch of life in all its features, and prays the gentle,

"For Goddës love as deme nat that I seye
Of yvel entent, but for I moot reherse
Here wordës alle, al be they better or werse,
Or ellës falsen som of my mateere.
And therfor who-so list it nat to heere,
Turne over the leef, and cheese another tale;
For he schal fynde ynowe bothe gret and smale,
Of storial thing that toucheth gentilesse,
And eek moralité and holynesse.
Blameth nat me, if that ye cheese amys.
The Miller is a cherl, ye knowe wel this;
So was the Reeve, and othir many mo,
And harlotry they tolden bothë two."

Many such men there are, and such tales as they tell belong to the churl's view and the churl's use of life. I tell you in a plain word, says Chaucer, the character of the next two tales; let none read them except those whom they should not offend. Compare this caution with the simple relish for less decent tales which Boccaccio represents his refined ladies and gentlemen as sharing with each other.

The Miller's Tale is of a rich old simpleton at Oxford, who was a carpenter by trade, and who took lodgers. He was married to a wild young Alison of eighteen, who preferred his lodger, the young clerk Nicholas, for whom she played false to the old man:

"He knew nat Catoun, for his wit was rude,
That bad man schulde wedde his similitude.
Men schulde wedde after hir astaat,
For eelde and youthe ben often at debaat."

There was also a trim and dainty curly-haired young parish-clerk named Absalon, who sang to the carpenter's wife of nights under her window, but did not win her favour. In vain he showed his skill by playing Herod in the miracle-play. Nicholas, who was an astrologer, persuaded the carpenter that there was to be a rain on Monday night that would bring on in one hour another flood like Noah's. He referred the carpenter to the miracle-play for an authority as to the deluge, and got him out of the way by persuading him to get a tub for each of them whereby to save themselves. While the carpenter hung in his tub from a beam in the ceiling, waiting for the waters to float him, his wife and lodger played him false. But as they amused themselves also with a rough practical jest upon Absalon outside, Absalon took a practical revenge, and exe-

cuted justice upon Nicholas with a hot coulter, in such a way that at his cry for Water, the carpenter, supposing the deluge had come, cut himself adrift from the ceiling, and fell to the floor. His wife and Nicholas, when the neighbours ran in, persuaded them that the old man was mad, and his arrangement of tubs for security against another Flood confirmed the accusation.

There is Chaucer's strength in the dramatic liveliness with which this story is told within short compass; and the four persons of it are vividly painted and characterised by master-touches. The source of its plot is unknown. Doubtless it was a variation of one of the numberless rough jesting tales of his day, that sin greatly against our modern notions of propriety. The old husband, beguiled and betrayed by a young wife, is a time-honoured figure in story. Breaches of marriage duty, worse than that of the carpenter's wife and his lodger, are made in our day the theme of plays and tales in which the conventional proprieties are observed, though true morality is outraged, and sin is plated with false sentiment. The churl's tale of the Miller does nothing of this. There is no moral evil in the part of it which most shocks the modern notion of propriety. It only tells, with a bygone outspokenness, of coarse behaviour; and, be it observed, makes this proceed in such a way from Alison and the clerk Nicholas, who would be the triumphant hero and heroine of an immoral tale, that though the Miller, who tells the tale, must not play moralist, theirs is the conduct which excites disgust, and we feel that the discipline of the hot coulter is not more than Nicholas deserves. Young girls in our own day read stories and see plays at which they do not blush, as they should, and would, if the coarse mind of the fascinating heroine were made to declare itself as Alison's does in the Miller's Tale, and if for the interesting hero there were an avenging Absalon at the end to strike at the root of lust with a hot coulter.

Oswald the Reeve, bred a carpenter, was in some anger at the Miller's tale, as being against one of his own craft, and undertook to match it with a tale against a miller. When the Miller's tale was done the pilgrims were at Deptford, and we have an indication of the time. Says the Host to the Reeve, who, as an old man, though not a good one, has had something to moralise of sparks yet alight in the ashes of life:

“Say forth thi tale, and tarye nat the tyme,
Lo heer is Depford, and it is passed prime.”¹

That is to say, they were three miles on their way, and the sun was up; or, it was past six in the morning.

The Reeve's Tale matches the story of one clerk of Oxford and a carpenter with another of two clerks of Cambridge and a miller. The same story forms the sixth novel in the ninth day of the Decameron; but Chaucer took it rather from the French original, a Fabliau of the trouvreur Jean de Boves, entitled, ‘De Gombert et des Deux Clercs.’ In the Fabliau, as in Chaucer, the miller's night of mishaps is represented as a punishment on him for stealing flour. Boccaccio drops that altogether; the miller, indeed, is in his story an innkeeper, and he tells a mere licentious tale, laying chief emphasis on a lie by which the two women escaped detection. “The Queen, he says, laid her next commands on Pamfilo, who therefore said: ‘Ladies, the name of Niccolosa, mentioned in the last novel, puts me in mind of one concerning another of the same name; in which it will be shown how the subtle contrivance of a certain good woman was the means of preventing a great deal of scandal.’” The same story has been imitated in the ‘Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles,’ and in the ‘Berceau’ of La Fontaine. In the Reeve's story, the miller's device for stealing the college corn, though one clerk stands above at the hopper to see it put into the mill, and the other stands below to see it come out, is Chaucer's own invention. The chase after their horse till evening gives good reason for the night's lodging at the mill, and the recovery of the cake hidden behind the door, as a result of the night's adventures, directs stronger attention to what little moral such a tale is able to contain.

The Cook's Tale is begun as a story of Perkin Revelour, a victualler's apprentice, who, when he had been dismissed for theft and riotous living, went out among fit associates. Having told as much as that in about sixty lines—having, in fact, only sketched the picture of an idle and riotous London apprentice—Chaucer breaks off. If he did not write the lines appended to the sketch in some MSS., as introductory to the Cook's ‘Tale of Gamelyn,’ they doubtless express his reason for throwing aside that story of Perkin Revelour. The Cook's Tale, as the prologue shows, was to follow the tales of the Miller and the Reeve. Chaucer began it as if it meant to read the Perkin Revellers of the city a stern lesson; but as he went on, he felt that, after such tales as those of the Miller and Reeve,

“A velany it were thareof more to spelle
Bot of a knyhte and his sonnes my tale I wil forthe telle.”

And thus is introduced

The Tale of Gamelyn, of which Mr. Tyrwhitt erred in saying that it is not found in any of the MSS. of the first authority.² It is a good spe-

¹ Primi sub lumine solis.—Æn. vi. 255. Also, the first canonical hour (6 A.M.)

² Mr. Robert Bell found it in the MS. chosen by him for transcription, and Mr. Richard Morris, in his careful new edition of the text based on the best MSS., does not find himself justified in excluding Gamelyn from its place among the Canterbury Tales.

cimen of the class of poetry to which the Robin Hood Ballads belong, and which was establishing itself in popular favour at the time when the Canterbury Tales were being written. If Chaucer wrote it, he departed from the character of his own style to imitate the form of popular poetry concerning outlaws in the greenwood, who withstood oppression and lightened the purses of fat abbots. The difference is not in metre only. There is, as in those popular ballads, and the old fabliaux to which they were allied, a swift sequence of incident to please holiday-making crowds among which they were said or sung—a popular hero with a strong arm and ready wit, a match for all oppressors, besides some little play of staves and bone-breaking; but there is none of the subtle character-painting that is in all Chaucer's later stories. Mr. Robert Bell was, I believe, right in suggesting that the 'Tale of Gamelyn' was really found among the papers representing Chaucer's unfinished work upon the Canterbury Tales, because he had designed to use it as material for a tale told in his own more dramatic way. It found its way at last into dramatic form, through Lodge's 'Rosalynde,' in Shakespeare's 'As you Like it;' and Shakespeare himself is said to have played his version of the part of Adam Spencer, who appears also in Gamelyn. Chaucer, if he did not himself write in imitation of the people's poetry the 'Tale of Gamelyn,' had, I believe, not only resolved to make this one of his pilgrims' stories, but also to substitute it for the one he had begun and laid aside as the Cook's Tale. For when he resolved that the Cook should not follow the example of the Miller and the Reeve, it still remained necessary that his story should be one that a man like the Cook might be supposed to tell. He might be supposed to know one of the ballad stories common among the people; and the exploits of Gamelyn were such as he could very well enjoy. There might even be so much dramatic truth in making the Cook run through the romance in ballad fashion, without subtle elaboration, as to leave us in slight doubt whether Gamelyn may not after all have been written by Chaucer.

The Tale of Gamelyn.

A doughty knight, named Sir Johan of Boundys, died, leaving his goods to his three sons, and most to Gamelyn, the youngest. But the eldest brother took Gamelyn's share, and kept the lad dependent on himself till he was stout enough to rebel. When he was to be whipped for this by his brother's orders, he drove all his brother's servants in a heap with a pestle that he found against a wall, and obliged his brother to come down from a loft in which he had taken refuge, and swear that he should have all that his father had bequeathed him.

Then there was a wrestling cried, and Gamelyn went up to it to wrestle for the ram and the ring, while his false brother prayed he might break his neck. He found a franklin lamenting that the champion wrestler had slain his two stalwart sons. Gamelyn overthrew the champion,

"And kast him on the left syde, that three ribbes to-brak
And therto his oon arm, that yaf a gret crak."

Gamelyn went home with the ram and ring, but his brother's door was shut against him by the porter. He burst it open with his foot, took the

porter by the neck, broke it, and threw him in the well. The others who were in the yard fled from him. Young Gamelyn kept open house, and gave meat and drink to all who would come, while his brother looked down from a little turret in which he lay hidden, and durst not speak.

When the guests were gone, Gamelyn's false brother came out of his hiding-place, and was told that he might pay himself for the spent store with the profits of his sixteen years' use of the goods bequeathed to Gamelyn. The false brother professed content, and vowed he would make Gamelyn his heir; but when he saw him throw the porter in the draw-well, he had sworn to bind him hand and foot. Would Gamelyn therefore let himself be so bound that his brother might not be forsworn? Gamelyn consented; but when he was safely bound, they fastened him to a post in the hall. His brother said he was mad; and he had no meat and drink given to him for two nights and days. But then he called to Adam Spencer—that is, Adam the butler or cellarer—who had been loved by Gamelyn's father, and had served his brother sixteen years; and Adam (this is he who, with certain changes, reappears in 'As you Like it,' and whose part Shakespeare himself is said to have acted), Adam secretly unlocked his fetters, led him into the spence or buttery, and gave him meat and wine.

On Sunday there was to be a feast in hall, of abbots, priors, and other holy churchmen. Gamelyn stood at his post as if still bound. He begged that the feasters would give him also some food, but the abbots and priors mocked and reviled him. Then Gamelyn left his post, and took one of two good oak staves that Adam had brought to the hall door. Adam took the other, and kept the door while both gave the fat abbots and priors a cudgelling.

“ ‘ Gamelyn,’ seyde Adam, ‘ do hem but good ;
They ben men of holy chirche, draw of hem no blood,
Save wel the croune, and do hem no harmes,
But brek bothe her legges and siththen here armes.’ ”

Gamelyn gave his brother, too, a broken rib, and fettered him to the post. Then Adam and his young master washed and sat down to meat.

The sheriff lived but five miles off, and all was soon told him. Four-and-twenty bold young men went from the sheriff to take Gamelyn and Adam. Gamelyn and Adam went out of the postern, each with a good cart-staff, and soon made them flee. The sheriff himself came next with a great rout. Then Gamelyn's counsel was—

“ I rede that we to wode goon or that we be founde,
Better is ther loos than in town y-bounde.”

Adam and Gamelyn took each of them a draught of wine and rode away. The sheriff found the fettered lord, loosed him, and sent after a leech to heal his broken rib.

Gamelyn and Adam the Spencer found merry men eating and drinking under boughs of the wood; and presently Gamelyn was made master over them all under the king of outlaws. Within three weeks news came

to the master outlaw that he might go home, his peace was made. In his place—

“Tho was Gamelyn crowned king of outlawes,
And walked a while under woode schawes.
The fals knight his brother was scherreve and sire,
And leet his brother endite for hate and for ire.”

When he learnt this, at the next shire Gamelyn walked boldly into the moot-hall to speak his mind to his false brother. He was taken and imprisoned, but released till the next sitting of jail deliverance by his other brother, Sir Ote, who was bail for him. If he did not then appear, Sir Ote was to take his place. Gamelyn, while with Sir Ote, desired to see how his men fared in the wood, and went to them, promising to appear in court on the appointed day. He exchanged news with his men, who told him of what they had been doing :

“Whil Gamelyn was outlawed, had he no cors ;
There was no man that for him ferde the wors,
But abbotes and priours, monk and chanoun,
On hem left he nothing whan he might hem nome.”

Then he remembered his promise, and went, with his young men at his back, to where the justice sat. He sent Adam in before to report. Adam came back and told him that he saw Sir Ote standing fettered in the moot-hall. Then Gamelyn's men kept the door of the hall. Gamelyn went in and took his brother out of fetters, cleaved the cheek-bone of the justice, threw him over the bar, and set himself in the justice-seat, with Sir Ote on one side and Adam on the other. The justice and the false brother were brought to the bar before him. Then he searched out the twelve “sisours that weren of the quest”—that is to say, the twelve conjurators who were to support by their oaths the charge on which Sir Ote would be hanged. Next he ordained them all a quest of his strong men, and hanged the justice, and the sheriff, and the sisours :

“Sir Ote was eldest, and Gamelyn was ying,
They wenten with here freendes even to the kyng ;
They made pees with the kyng of the best assise.
The kyng loved wel Sir Ote, and made him a justise.
And after the kyng made Gamelyn, both in est and west,
Chef justice of al his fre forest.”

The Man of Law's Tale is not distinctly connected by its prologue with the preceding stories ; but as we have here again an indication of the time of day—and that is said to be ten o'clock in the morning¹—the tale evidently should have no late place

¹ Sir Harris Nicolas, in his *Introductory Discourse to the Canterbury Tales*, ed. 1845, pp. 263, 4, thus elaborates details of argument as to the time of day specified by Chaucer. “In the Prologue to the Man of Law's Tale Chaucer recalls our attention to the action, if I may so call it, of his drama, the journey

in the series. The Man of Law says that he knows no tale that Chaucer, though his skill is but unlearned in metres and rhyming, has not told already in one book or another; referring to his 'Legend of Good Women' or the 'Seintes Legendes of Cupide,' and speaking of him as one who had told of more lovers than Ovid, though he would write no word of such unnatural abominations as the wicked example of Canace, or of the in-

of the pilgrims. They had set out soon after the day began to spring (v. 824 and f.). When the Reeve was beginning to tell his tale, they were in the neighbourhood of Deptford and Greenwich, and it was half-way prime" [the right reading is "passed prime"]; "that is, I suppose, half-way past prime, about half-hour after seven A.M. (v. 3904, 5). How much further they were advanced upon their road at this time is not said; but the hour of the day is pointed at by two circumstances. We are first told (v. 4422, 3) that

'the sonne
The ark of his artificial day had ronne
The fourthe part and half an hour and more;'

and secondly (v. 4432), that he was 'five and forty degrees high;' and this circumstance is so confirmed by the mention of a corresponding phenomenon, that it is impossible to suspect any error in the number. The equality in length of shadows to their projecting bodies can only happen when the sun is at the height of 45° . Unfortunately, however, this description will neither enable us to conclude with the MSS. that it was 'ten of the clock,' nor to fix upon any other hour, as the two circumstances just mentioned are not found to coincide in any part of the 28th or of any other day of April in this climate. All that we can conclude with certainty is, that it was not past ten of the clock."

And he says in a note:

"The sun rose about half an hour after four, and the length of the artificial day was a little more than fifteen hours. A fourth part of fifteen hours ($= 3^h 45^m$) and half an hour and more may be fairly computed to make together $4\frac{1}{2}$ hours, which, being reckoned from $4\frac{1}{2}$ A.M., give the time of the day exactly 9 A.M. But the sun was not at an altitude of 45° till about half-an hour after nine.

"When he tells us that 'the shoures of April had perced to the rote the drought of March' (v. 1, 2), we must suppose, in order to allow due time for such an operation, that April was far advanced; while on the other hand, the place of the sun, 'having just run half his course in the Ram' (v. 7, 8), restrains us to some day in the very latter end of March, as the vernal equinox, in the age of Chaucer, according to his own treatise on the astrolabe, was computed to happen on the 12th of March. This difficulty may, and I think should, be removed by reading, in verse 8, the Bull instead of the Ram. All the parts of this description will then be consistent with themselves and with another passage (v. 4425), where, in the best MSS. the 'eichte and twenty day' of April is named as the day of the journey to Canterbury." The MS. followed by Mr. Morris has "the eightetene day."

cestuous love of King Antiochus, in 'Apollonius of Tyre.' I see no ground whatever for imagining this passage, in accord with Chaucer's natural feeling as shown in his works, to have been dictated by the low personal motive of unfriendly feeling towards Gower. The tale of Canace was Ovid's, and familiar to all educated readers before Gower included it in his 'Confessio Amantis.' 'Apollonius of Tyre' was a tale that had been told even in Anglo-Saxon; and the part of it which repelled Chaucer is a single incident in its opening, which would naturally occur to him as a good example of the sort of love adventure that he differed from his neighbours and from the ancients in excluding from his verse. He was so far from meaning to speak ill of his friend Gower, who had just written, or was then writing, the 'Confessio Amantis,' that he proceeds to give as

The Man of Law's Tale, the story of the pious Constance,¹ from the second book of the 'Confessio Amantis.'

The Wife of Bath's Tale, which comes next in the series, though its place is not indicated by any lines that connect its elaborate prologue with what has gone before, is also one of the tales in the 'Confessio Amantis'—namely, that, in the first book, of the Knight Florentius, who by obedience won a perfect bride.² As no earlier date than 1393 can be assigned to the 'Confessio Amantis,' if Chaucer followed Gower we have incidental confirmation of the fact that he was working at the Canterbury Tales in the last years before his death, in 1400. In the Wife of Bath's Tale, Chaucer makes the old hag, to whom the knight owes courtesy, preach sound doctrine upon the making of a gentleman, and quotes two or three lines from Dante's 'Purgatory' in support of it:

"Lok who that is most vertuous alway,
 Privé and pert, and most entendith ay
 To do the gentil dedès that he can,
 Tak him for the grettest gentil man.
 Crist wol we clayme of him oure gentillesse,
 Nought of oure eldres for her olde richesse.
 * * * * *
 Wel can the wysè poet of Florence,
 That hattè Daunte, speke of this sentence;
 Lo in such manner of rym is Daunte's tale:
 Ful seeld upriseth by his braunchis smale
 Prowis of man, for God of his prowessse
 Wol that we clayme of him our gentillesse."³

¹ See pp. 117-119.

² See p. 115.

³ "Rade volte risurge per li rami
 L'umana probitate: e questo vuole
 Quei, che la dà, perche da lui si chiami."

Dante, *Purg.* vii. 121.

The Wife of Bath's Tale is attached to nothing that precedes; but those of the Friar and the Summoner are pointed out by their prologues as those which should follow it.

The Friar's Tale is told contemptuously of a Summoner, who, when he was riding to oppress a widow, fell in with a foul fiend who rode like himself, and to whom the Summoner, not venturing, for shame, to name his true calling, professed himself a bailiff. The foul fiend professed to be a bailiff too, and, after congenial talk, in the course of which he explained that he was a devil, he still found the Summoner willing to ride with him, and go shares in any plunder that might fall to either of the two. They came to a carter with his cart in a rut, crying to his horses, and exclaiming presently in desperation, "The devil have all, both horse and cart and hay!" "Take them," whispered the Summoner; "they are given to you." "No they are not," said the fiend; "the churl spake one thing, but he thought another." Presently, when they got out of the rut, the carter was blessing his horses. When they came to the house of the poor old widow, and the Summoner was cruelly extorting twelve pence from her on pretence of a summons to the archdeacon's court, he told her the foul fiend should fetch him if he excused her. She must pay him twelve pence, or he would carry away her new pan, for what he had paid on her account when she was summoned before. She never had been summoned, had been always a true woman, she said; and she gave his body and her pan too to the devil. When the devil heard her say this, he asked whether she really meant it. On her knees she declared that she did, unless the Summoner would repent. "Nay, old slot," said the Summoner, "I mean no repenting. I would I had your smock and every cloth of you." And so the devil took what had been given him. Mr. Wright has pointed out an early Latin story of a steward and the devil similar to this;¹ and in a part of Ireland early occupied by the Anglo-Normans, a variation of it has lately been heard from a farmer's wife at Crombogue,² as a legend of the devil and the hearth-money collector at Bantry.

The Summoner's Tale takes vengeance for this story with an equally contemptuous sketch of a friar who went to visit a dying man, kissed his wife, bespoke for himself in his house the liver of a capon and roast pig's head for dinner, preached to him hypocritically when he had been already shriven by his curate, and urged him to give of his treasure to the convent. At last the sick man, well nigh mad with wrath, begged the friar to grope down his back for a treasure hidden in the bed, gave into his hand an airy nothing, and bade him go and divide that with his twelve brethren. Friar John was then turned out of the house, and went in wrath to a great lord whom he confessed, telling his patron of the indignity put on him. But the question raised thereon was, how to divide such a gift equally among the twelve members of the convent; and

¹ 'Archæologia,' vol. xxii. pp. 364-66.

² 'Legendary Fictions of the Irish Celts,' collected and narrated by Patrick Kennedy. London, 1866, pp. 147-48. Mr. Kennedy repeats the tale without observing that it is in Chaucer.

the solving of that problem by a suggestion of a cart-wheel with twelve spokes, and at the end of every spoke a friar's nose, makes the roughly-contemptuous finish of the story.

This tale, cousin to a fabliau by Jacques de Baisieux,¹ is, like that which preceded it, I need hardly say, not in contempt of religion, but in defence of religion against the most infamous and the most sordid of the forms in which the name of the Most High was in his time habitually taken in vain. No scorn is too bitter against the mock religion that is made the basest of all trades by the self-seeking hypocrite. Chaucer was truly and essentially religious. The usage of his time permitted forms of jesting that the usage of our time holds to be indecorous; but the spirit was that of a Christian gentleman, which, as we have just seen, is the only sort of gentleman that Chaucer recognizes, when he spurns the hypocrites, of whom the Summoner and the Friar of these two stories were well-recognised types.

After this group of three tales, duly fastened to each other, comes the Clerk's Tale, without any lines in its prologue connecting it with what had gone before. From the Clerk's tale onward there is a sequence of four tales which are arranged in a fixed order, and firmly connected together by their prologues—the Clerk's, the Merchant's, the Squire's, and the Franklin's. The first of this sequence of four stories is obtained by sudden appeal of the Host to the Clerk of Oxford, who is riding, he says, still and coy as a new-spoused maid. His studies would have taken him, according to the custom among students of his time, to universities abroad, and he offers a tale that he (not Chaucer personally)

“Lernëd at Padowe of a worthy clerk,
As provyd by his wordës and his werk.
Fraunces Petrark, the laureat poete
Hightë this clerk, whos rethoriquë swete
Enlumynd al Ytail of poetrie
As Linian² did of philosophie,
Or lawye, or other art particulere.”

¹ Dit de la Vessie du Curé. ‘Hist. Litt. de la France,’ vol. xxiii. pp. 157, 8.

² Mr. Tyrwhitt, in his notes to the Canterbury Tales, first pointed out that this is the canonist Giovanni di Lignano, once illustrious, now almost forgotten, though several works of his remain. He was made Professor of Canon Law at Bologna in 1363, and died at Bologna in 1383. Urban VI. would have kept him at Rome, but let him depart, “propter studium Bononiense quod in absentia tanti viri desolatum maneret.” His epitaph called him “Alter Aristoteles, Hippocras erat et Ptolomæus.”

The Clerk's Tale is the story of the patience of Griselda, that last tale in the 'Decameron' which Petrarch said none had been able to read without tears, and of which he sent to Boccaccio with the last letter he ever wrote, his own Latin translation, made in 1373, the year before his own death, and two years before the death of Boccaccio. It was entitled 'De Obedientia et Fide Uxoriam, Mythologia.'¹ Chaucer's poem is very manifestly founded upon this version of Boccaccio's tale, from the 'Est ad Italiæ latus occiduum Vesulus,' &c. :

"There is right at the west side of Itaille
Doun at the rote of Vesulus the cold,"

to the religious application at the end, and the citation of the general Epistle of St. James. Yet the poetical treatment of the story is so individual, that it all comes afresh out of the mind of Chaucer.

The shrewd practical sense that is in all Chaucer's poetry appears very distinctly in his beautiful version of this legend of wifely obedience. Its pathos is heightened by the humanizing touches with which he reconciles the most matter-of-fact reader to its questionable aspects. Wifely obedience is good, but the legend jars a little with an English sense of what is right and natural when it represents that a poor girl married to a marquis suffered him, as she believed, to murder first her infant daughter, then her infant son, continuing patient in love to him. It is a small matter after this that she also suffered him to send her back to poverty, and consented to serve, at his bidding, the new wife for whom she believed he had prepared a wedding feast; before she learnt that the new wife was her own long-lost daughter, and the new wife's brother the son whom she believed also to have been murdered, the whole grief she had borne silently having been but a trial of her wifely obedience extended over many of the best years of her life. Chaucer feels that this is against nature, and at every difficult turn in the story he disarms the realist with a light passage of fence, wins to his own side the host of readers with the common English turn for ridicule of an ideal that conflicts with reason, and so tells the tale that its delicacy is even refined, while it can be read without a pish or pshaw by the most hard-headed north-country stockbroker of this our nineteenth century. All poetry of Chaucer's has this character, and it is a home-charm of it which not only escapes the appreciation of all foreign critics, but has aspects that even now and then offend them.

In the Clerk's Tale, as he advances in the story of the marquis's "marvellous desire his wife to assay," and is about to tell of the taking of her firstborn, Chaucer writes :

"He had assayed hir ynough bifore,
And fond hir ever good, what needith it
Hir to tempte, and alway more and more?
Though som men prayse it for a subtil wit,
But as for me, I say that evel it sit
Tassay a wyf whan that it is no neede,
And puttë hir in anguysch and in dreede."

¹ F. Petrarchæ Opera quæ extant Omnia; ed. Basil. 1554, pp. 601-7.

Before he tells of the taking of her next child, Chaucer says :

“O ! needles was sche tempted in assay.
But weddid men ne knowen no mesure,
Whan that thay fynde a pacient creatùre.”

And adds, for further humanizing of the story, a suggestion of the dogged persistence of the obstinate man.—What could he more ?

“But ther ben folk of such condicioun,
That, when thay have a certeyn purpos take,
They can nought stynt of her entencioun,
But, right as they were bounden to a stake,
Thay wil not of her firstë purpos slake.”

That true suggestion reconciles us to the next extremity of what the poet rightly entitles “wicked usage,” while of Griselda his reflection is :

“Though clerkës praysë wommen but a lite,
There can no man in humblesse him acquyte
As wommen can, ne can be half so trewe
As wommen ben.”

And when he has told all, and dwelt with an exquisite pathos of natural emotion all his own upon the patient mother's piteous and tender kissing of her recovered children—for there is nothing in Boccaccio, and but half a sentence in Petrarch,¹ answering to those four beautiful stanzas beginning,

“Whan sche this herd, aswonë doun she fallith,
For pitous joy, and after her swownyng
Sche bothe hir yongë children to hir callith”—

he rounds all, as Petrarch had done, with simple sense, which gives religious meaning to the tale, then closes with a lighter strain of satire which protects Griselda herself from the mocker. Griselda, adds Chaucer, herein repeating Petrarch, is not a pattern to be literally followed :

“This story is sayd, nat for that wyvës scholde
Folwë Grisild, as in humilité,
For it were importáble, though they wolde;
But for that every wight in his degré
Schuldë be constant in adversité.
As was Grisild, therfore Petrark writeth
This story, which with high stile he enditeth.
For sith a womman was so pacient
Unto a mortal man, wel more us oughte
Receyven all in gre that God us sente.”

¹ “Hæc illa audiens penè gaudio exanimis, et pietate amens, jucundissimisque cum lacrymis suorum pignorum in amplexus ruit, fatigatque osculis, pioque gemitu madefacit.”—*Petrarch, De ob. et fid. Ux.*

He adds Petrarch's quotation of St. James, the opening of whose Epistle gives, in words of Scripture, the spiritual doctrine to which Petrarch, and after him Chaucer, would apply the tale of Griselda's patience. "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trial of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work." And again, at the close: "Behold we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord." Having pointed to this moral, the Clerk of Oxford ends cheerily. Nowadays Griselds are hard to find; wherefore, and for love of the Wife of Bath, he will say them a song; and so he ends with a playful snatch of satire that begins:

"Grisilde is deed, and eek hir pacience,
And bothe at oonës buried in Itayle.

The Merchant's Tale, next following, modernised afterwards by Pope, in his 'January and May,' is another story of the beguilement and betrayal of an old husband by a young wife. This story Tyrwhitt refers to a Latin fable by Adolphe, written about 1315.¹

The Squire's Tale is of the Tartar Cambys Kan, or Cambuscan, who warred with Russia, and who had two sons, Algarsif and Camballo, and a daughter Canace. When Cambuscan had ruled for twenty years, he kept the feast of his nativity "at Sarra in the lond of Tartarie." To that feast the king of Arabia and India sent as gifts a flying horse of brass, able to carry its rider to any place where so he list within four-and-twenty hours; a mirror in which coming adversity or enmity would show itself, or falsehood in a lover; and a ring that gave the power to converse with birds and know the healing virtue of each herb. The mirror and ring were for Canace. The king of Arabia gave also a naked sword which would cut through all armour, and inflict a wound that the sword itself only could heal, by stroking over with the flat side of the blade. The ignorant people doubted, dreaded,

"As lewed peple demeth comunly
Of thingës that ben maad more subtilly
Than they can in her lewednes comprehende
They deemen gladly to the badder ende."

wondered,

"As sore wondren som of cause of thonder,
On ebb and flood, on gossamer, and on myst,
And on alle thing, til that the cause is wist."

After supper, the strange knight who brought these gifts told how to set the horse in motion by turning a pin in its ear, and saying where it was to go. Canace, who did not wish on the morrow to look pale or unfit for festival, went early to rest; but, delighting in her ring and mirror, awoke after her first sleep, before all her women, and roused ten or

¹ It is the seventh of the Fables of Alfonse, added by Caxton to his *Æsop*, printed 1484; but it is not in the MS. Latin original of Petrus Alphonsus, nor in the old French translation.

twelve of them to walk abroad with her. In her walk, she saw on a dead tree a fair falcon, that seemed a peregrine from strange lands, shrieking, beating herself with her wings, and tearing herself with her beak. She offered help and comfort to the bird, which fell in swoon. She took it in her lap, and, when the bird revived, it spoke to her; began, with a line which occurs more than once in Chaucer's poetry—

“That pitee renneth sone in gentil herte,”¹

to tell how she was bred in a rock of grey marble, and exchanged her plighted love with a tercelet

“That semed welle of allë gentillesse
Al were he ful of treson and falsenesse;”

and, flying away from her, gave his love to a kite and left her forlorn. Canace took the falcon home, healed her with herbs, made a mew for her near her own bed's-head, covered with blue velvet “in sign of trouth that is in woman sene:”

“And al without the mew is peinted grene,
In which were peinted al thise falsë foules
As bene thise tidifes, tercelettes and owles,”

with pies beside to cry and chide at them. Now, says the poet, he will leave this part of his tale

“To speke of aventüres and of batailles,
That yet was never herd so great mervailles.
First wol I tellen you of Cambuscan,
That in his timë many a citee wan:
And after wol I speke of Algarsif,
How that he wan Theodora to his wif,
For whom ful oft in great peril he was,
Ne had he ben holpen by the hors of bras.
And after wol I speke of Camballo,
That fought in listës with the brethren two
For Canace, er that he might hire win,
And ther I left I wol againe beginne.”

Here the tale is left unfinished, with stately promise of a sage and solemn tune

“Of turneys and of trophies hung,
Of forests and enchantments drear,
Where more is meant than meets the ear,”

¹ In the Prologue to the ‘Legend of Good Women,’ the God of Love says to the poet:

“Thou hast deservëd sorë for to smart,
But pitë renneth sone in gentil herte.”

which afterwards suggested to Milton the wish that divinest Melancholy would raise Musæus or Orpheus,

“ Or call up him that left half-told
The story of Cambuscan bold,
Of Cambell and of Algarsife,
And who had Canacè to wife,
That owned the virtuous ring and glass ;
And of the wondrous horse of brass
On which the Tartar king did ride.”¹

Though, on the whole, Melancholy might consult her own interests better than by calling Chaucer up, he was named rightly in such context by Milton, who could recognise the deep religious earnestness that lay at the heart of Chaucer's verse.

The Franklin's Tale, said in the prologue to be from a Breton lay, is that of the fifth novel of the tenth day in the 'Decameron,' and is introduced also by Boccaccio in the fifth book of his 'Filocopo.' It is of Dorigen, a faithful wife, who mourned her husband's absence to seek honour of arms in Britain. Her home was on the most rocky and barren coast of Brittany. During her husband's absence she said, to escape the importunity of a suitor, Aurelius, that she would be false to her husband for his sake when he had made the coast so clear of rocks that there should be no stone to be seen. Aurelius found a magician by whose spells it was contrived that, for a few days, the rocks seemed to be gone. Then he went to Dorigen, who, as a true wife, lamented deeply; and when her husband—who had returned, and was then absent only for a short time—came back to her, she told him her great trouble. He bade her be true of word as she was true of heart—

“ Trouthe is the heighest thing that men may kepe.”

She went, therefore, with her husband's good will, to keep her word with Aurelius; but he, wondering at their gentle sense of honour, released her of her promise, and took leave of her,

“ As of the trewest and the bestë wif
That ever yit I knew in al my lyf.”

The magician, not to be outdone in generosity, hearing of this, forgave Aurelius the thousand pounds he was to pay for his enchantments.

The order of the tales varies at this point in several MSS. That followed in the latest and best edition of the text of Chaucer, Mr. Richard Morris's, accepts what we shall find to be a wrong arrangement, upon good MS. authority, and now gives us

¹ 'Il Penseroso,' lines 109-115.

The Second Nun's Tale. This is the poem on the 'Life and Passion of St. Cecilia,' written in Chaucer's earlier years. Its opening lines say that it was translated as an exercise against idleness, the minister and nurse of vice; and, except the opening invocation to the Virgin, it is a metrical translation from the 'Legenda Aurea,' a treatise on Church festivals, written at the end of the thirteenth century by Jacobus à Voragine, Archbishop of Genoa, which Chaucer had read probably in the French translation by Jehan de Vignay. Acts of the martyrs were thus written to be read in churches on their feast-days, the acts of the martyrdom of Polycarp, so used, being the oldest record of the kind after the Acts of the Apostles.

Connected with this is the

Canon's Yeoman's Tale by the prologue, which says, that after the life of St. Cecilia had been told, they reached Boughton-under-Blean, where they were overtaken, as I have already described, by the yeoman of the alchemist canon. The Yeoman's Tale is of a canon—not his deserted lord, but cleverer than he—who, having borrowed one mark of a priest for three days, and repaid him punctually, proceeded to beguile him by jugglery, fully described in the story, into the belief that he knew how to make silver. The priest paid forty pounds in nobles for the secret, got instructions that were valueless, and never saw the canon any more. This kind of fraud was still common as late as the sixteenth century.¹

Some lines, which are not in every MS., which are not good, and which may not be Chaucer's, precede the Host's calling upon the Doctor of Physic for a tale, and, if authentic, establish a position for the Doctor's tale after the Canon's Yeoman's.

The Doctor's Tale is of Virginius and Virginia from Livy, from the 'Confessio Amantis,' or from any collection in which it was among the familiar stories of the day. It is a tale of maiden purity, argues that

"Of al tresoun sovereyn pestilence
Is whan a wight bytrayeth innocence,"

and warns parents of their duty to their children.

After the Doctor's Tale follow seven that Chaucer clearly marked by their prologues to succeed it and each other in the order in which they now stand—the Pardoner's, the Shipman's, the Prioress's, Chaucer's own Rhyme of Sir Thopas and Tale of Melibeus, the Monk's Tale, and the Nun's Priest's Tale. Considering that the pilgrims were only seven miles from Canterbury when the Canon's Yeoman joined them, it is not probable that all these tales, as well as those of the Manciple and Parson,

¹ It was described by Bernard Palissy in a passage that reminds one strongly of the Canon's Yeoman's Tale. 'Des Metaux et Alchimie' (Œuvres ed. 1777, pp. 326, 7).

which stand afterwards as clearly meant to be the last two, were told after the Canon's Yeoman's. Conclusive reason against such an order will appear when we come to the prologue of the Monk's Tale. I reject, therefore, the opening lines¹ which fix the place of the Doctor's Tale after the Canon's Yeoman's.

The Pardoner's Tale (eighty-second in the 'Cento Novelle Antiche') is that which shows how,

"Though myself be a ful vicious man,
A moral tale yit I yow tellen can,
Which I am wont to prechë, for to wyne."

It begins with earnest religious preaching against gluttony and drunkenness, illustrated by examples; and then tells of three rioters who, long before prime was rung on any bell, were drinking in a tavern, when they heard the clink of the bell before a corpse that was being carried to its grave. It was the body of an old comrade of theirs, who had died of plague that night as he sat drunk on his bench. The innkeeper and his boy bade the three revellers beware of Death, who had been slaying many in a great village about a mile thence; but the drunkards pledged each other to slay Death. So they went, in rage, towards the village, and had gone about half a mile, when, at a stile they were about to cross, they met a poor old man. They asked him rudely how he lived to be so old? He said it was because none would change youth for his age, and Death would not take him.

"Thus walk I lik a restëles caytif,
And on the ground, which is my modres gate,
I knokkë with my staf, erly and late,
And sayë, 'Leevë moder, let me in.'"

¹ "Whan that this yoman his tale ended hadde
Of this false chanon whiche that was so badde,
Oure oste gan say, 'truly and certayne
Thys preest was begyled, sothely for to sayne,
(He wenyng for to be a phylosofre),
Tylle he right no golde lefte in hys coffre;
And sothely this preest had a lither jape,
Thys cursed chanoun put in hys hood an ape.
But al this passe wil I overe as now,
Sir Doctour," &c.

There is no ring at all of Chaucer in those interpolated lines.

"Ye let that passen,' quoth our Hoste, 'as now,'"

with which the prologue to the Doctor's Tale begins in other copies, would apply very well to the question with which the Franklin ended his tale, place the Doctor's Tale, where Tyrwhitt places it, after the Franklin's, secure a fixed succession of twelve stories, and throw the Canon's Yeoman's Tale to its more natural place near the close of the series.

But, he said, they did amiss in speaking rudely to white-headed age. They told him he was a false thief, who was in accord with Death for the slaying of young folk. They would not let him go till he had told them where Death was. He directed them to an oak in the wood. They went there, and found under it nearly eight bushels of gold florins. At this they rejoiced, and cast lots which of them should go to the town to fetch bread and wine while the others watched the treasure. The lot fell on the youngest. While he was gone his comrades plotted to kill him on his return, that the gold might be divided between two only; and he himself plotted to poison two of the three bottles of wine he brought, that all the gold might belong to himself alone. So they slew him, and had short mirth afterwards over the wine he had poisoned.

The Parish Priest was called upon for the next tale; but as he replied with Benedicite, and reprovèd the Host for his oaths, the Host cried that, by Jankin, he smelt a Lollard in the wind, one who would give them preaching. The Shipman said he should sow no cockle of difficulty in the clean corn; they all believed in God, and he would tell a merry tale himself to shut the Parson's mouth.

The Shipman's Tale is Boccaccio's first of the eighth day in the 'Decameron.' It is of a knavish young monk, Dan John, who secretly borrowed money of a merchant, which he used in ruining his wife, and then told him that he had repaid into the wife's hands all he had borrowed.

The Prioress's Tale is the legend of a Christian widow's child killed by the Jews in Asia. The child when living had loved the Virgin, who appeared to it when dying, and put a grain under its tongue, so that the dead child-martyr still sang, 'O alma redemptoris mater.' Until the grain was removed from under the tongue the song continued. This poem was modernised by Wordsworth.

Chaucer's Rime of Sir Thopas is a merry, musical burlesque upon the metrical romances of the day, the chief purpose of it being to caricature the profusion of tedious and trivial detail that impeded the progress of a story of tasteless adventure. As had been said in the Squire's Tale,

"The knottë, why that every tale is told,
If that it be taryëd til lust be cold
Of hem that han hit after herkned yore,
The savour passeth ever lenger the more,
For fulsomnes of the prolixité."

The Rime of Sir Thopas is a playful example of this. All the story told, in thirty-three stanzas, before the Host cries out, "No more of this for Goddes dignitee," is, that Sir Thopas rode into a forest, where he lay down; and as he had dreamed all night that he should have an elf-queen for his love, got on his horse again to go in search of the elf-queen; met a giant, whom he promised to kill next day, the giant throwing stones at him, and came again to town to dress himself for the adventure. The pertinacity with which the rhyme proceeds to spin and hammer out all

articles of clothing and armour worn by Sir Thopas, makes the Host exclaim at him, "Mine eerès aken for thy drasty speche." The device, too, is ingenious which puts the poet out of question in his own company, so far as regards the final question, as to who has won the supper? His verse being cried out upon, he answers the demand upon him for a tale in prose with

The Tale of Melibeus, which is a translation from the Latin text of Albertano de Brescia, or its French version, the 'Livre de Melibée et de Dame Prudence.'¹ Melibeus had by his wife Prudence a daughter, Sophie. When he was away from home, three of his old enemies came in by the window, beat his wife, and left his daughter for dead with five wounds—that is to say, in her feet, hands, ears, nose, and mouth. When Melibeus returned home, and raved at this, Prudence his wife talked wisely to him, and by her counsel he called a congregation of folk to counsel him. They were folk of many qualities, and they gave counsel of many sorts; but the opinion of the greater number was that he should take vengeance on his enemies.

Prudence his wife bade him pause, "for Petrus Alphonsus saith, whoso that doth to thee either good or harm, haste thee not to quite it, for in this wise thy friend will abide, and thine enemy shall the longer live in dread."

Melibeus replied that he should not oppose the counsel of so many wise men for a woman, when women are naught; and Solomon says that a man never should give a woman power over himself.

Prudence, in reply, is courteously argumentative. Melibeus finds Solomon right when he says that words like hers are honeycombs which give sweetness to the soul and wholesomeness to the body. He will be governed by her counsel in all things. Upon which she gives him a great deal of counsel, and especially upon the mistake he had made in choosing his advisers. He should have called only a few folk, and those true friends, old and wise. Then she proceeds to enlarge at great length on the several counsels that had been given by the wise physicians and other grave, true, experienced friends, and by the old enemies reconciled, the flatterers, and the young folk.

She tells him he is Melibee—that is to say, a man that drinketh honey—that he has drunk honey of temporal delights, and forgotten his Creator, wherefore the three enemies of mankind, the world, the flesh, and the devil, have got in at the windows of his body and wounded his soul in five places, namely, through the five wits; and in like manner the wounding of his daughter had been suffered.

Let him make his peace with God, and let her privately speak with his enemies. Which she did; and talked so well to them of the blessing of peace, that they acknowledged their offence. Then she contrived with them that they should deliver themselves up to Melibeus, offering what atonement he required; and she contrived also with Melibeus so that he thereupon received them into his grace, forgave them their trespasses, as he hoped that his own and their trespasses might be forgiven of God, and they all be brought to the bliss that never hath end.

¹ British Museum, MSS. Reg. 19, c. vii. and xi.

The slight allegory is only contrived as a means for producing a didactic dialogue, in which Prudence discourses at large on the religious principles that should control men's lives. The Tale of Melibeus and the Parson's Tale are the only prose pieces among the 'Canterbury Tales.'

The monk is placed, by the prologue to his tale, after Chaucer among the story-tellers; and his tale is so far from having been meant to stand after that of the Canon's Yeoman, that, while the Canon's Yeoman joined the party at Boughton-under-Blean, seven miles from Canterbury, the Monk's Tale was told when the pilgrims were near Rochester—"Lo Rowchestre stant heer faste by"—and they had eighteen miles to ride on from Rochester before they would reach Boughton-under-Blean.

The Monk's Tale sets out with the Monk's saying that he

"wol bywaile in maner of tregedye
The harm of hem that stood in heigh degre,
And fallen so ther is no remedye
To bring hem out of her adversitee."

He tells, with this purpose, of Lucifer, Adam, Samson, Hercules, Nebuchadnezzar, Balthazar, Zenobia, Nero, Holofernes, Antiochus, Alexander, Julius Cæsar, Croesus, Pedro of Spain, Pedro of Cyprus, Barnabo Visconti, and Ugolino of Pisa, following only the general idea of Boccaccio's 'de Casibus Illustrium Virorum.' He says in telling of Zenobia:

"Let him unto my maister Petrark go,
That writeth ynough of this I undertake.

He takes from Dante the story of Ugolino, and adds:

"Who so wol here it in a longer wise,
Redeth the gretë poete of Itaille,
That hightë Daunt, for he can it devise
Fro point to point, not o word wol he faille."¹

The Knight stops Piers the monk, and the Host tells him that his tale annoyeth all the company. Sir John, the Nun's priest, is called upon to tell them something merry.

The Nun's Priest's Tale is that afterwards modernized by Dryden as the 'Cock and Fox,' and is taken from the fifth chapter of the 'Roman de Renart.'²

The widow's cock Chanticleer groaned in his sleep as he roosted beside his fair Partlet; and it was because he had dreamed of a fox. Dame

¹ The MS. followed by Mr. Morris, in his text of Chaucer, omits the characters that follow Croesus.

² Ed. Meon., tom. i. p. 49, cited by Mr. Thomas Wright.

Partlet argued upon this very wisely, quoting Cato upon the philosophy of dreams; but Chanticleer replied from Cicero, 'De Divinatione,' with the tale of the man who through a dream discovered his murdered comrade in a dung-cart, quoted also the Life of St. Kenelm and Macrobius, besides Pharaoh, Joseph, Daniel, Croesus, and others. And Dan Russel the fox did come upon Chanticleer, befool him with flattery, and carry him off, as he stood high on his toes, and lifted his head and shut his eyes to show how he could sing. Dame Partlet shrieked louder than Hasdrubal's wife when her husband was killed and the Romans had burnt Carthage. The woful hens cried like the senators' wives when Nero burnt Rome. The widow and her daughter started out of doors at the cry of the hens, and saw the fox go toward the wood with the cock on his back:

"They criden, 'Out! harrow and wayleway!
 Ha, ha, the fox!' and after him they ran,
 And eek with stavës many another man;
 Ran Colle our dogge, and Talbot, and Garlond,
 And Malkyn, with a distaf in hir hond;
 Ran cow and calf, and eek the veray hogges
 Sore fered werë for berkyng of dogges,
 And schowting of the men and wymmen eke,
 They ronñe that they thought her hertë breke.
 They yelleden as feendes doon in helle;
 The dokës criden as men wold hem quelle;
 The gees for ferë flowen over the trees;
 Out of the hyvës cam the swarm of bees;
 So hidous was the noise, a benedicite!"

The cock said that if he were fox he would turn and speak his defiance to them all. The fox answered, "In faith, it shall be done;" and as he opened his mouth to say that, the cock broke loose, flew up into a tree, and was not to be tempted down again by flattery. He said that he was never to be flattered again into shutting his eyes when he ought to see; and the fox moralized his own blunder by saying:

"God yive him meschaunce
 That is so undiscret of governaunce,
 That jangleth, when he scholdë holde his pees."

So this tale also comes to an earnest close. And

"ye that holdë this tale a folye
 As of a fox, or of a cok and hen,
 Takith the moralité therof, goode men.
 For Seint Paul saith, that al that writen is,
 To oure doctrine it is i-write i-wys.
 Takith the fruyt, and let the chaf be stille.
 Now goodë God, if that it be thy wille,
 As saith my lord, so make us alle good men;
 And bring us alle to his highe blisse. *Amen.*"

We come now to the two stories evidently meant to be the

last told on the way to Canterbury. The original plan, that each pilgrim should tell two stories on the way out and two on the way home, seems to have been changed in the execution. No pilgrim tells more than one tale; and the Cook—of whom we have a tale begun and abandoned, while another, that of Gamelyn, perhaps was set aside as the material for a tale of his—is represented as having reached Canterbury drunk, without having told any tale at all. In the prologue to the Manciple's Tale we read that at

“a litel town
Which that iclepð is Bob-up-an-Down,
Under the Ble, in Canterbury way,”

the Host jested at the drunken Cook, who had a tale to tell. The Manciple reproved his drunkenness and excused him his story. The wrathful Cook nodded at the Manciple and fell from his horse. The manciple, in pledge of peace, gave the helpless Cook a draught of wine from a private gourd of his own. The Cook thanked the Manciple “in such wise as he couthe,” and the Manciple's story was then told. Whatever place may have been called Bob-up-and-Down, “under the Ble” is under the Blean. Boughton-under-Ble, where the Canon's Yeoman joined the party, is Boughton-under-Blean. Bob-up-and-Down has not yet been identified, but Up-and-Down means Hill, and Babb's Hill, near Canterbury, is, I have no doubt, the place where the Manciple began the tale which should be immediately preceded by the Canon's Yeoman's.

The Manciple's Tale is from Ovid's 'Metamorphoses' (Bk. II. lines 534-50), of the crow that was white being turned black for telling Apollo of the falsehood of his Coronis. Chaucer calls the wife's lover her leman, then accounted a rude name, and applied only to the lower classes; but he justifies use of the rougher word:

“The wise Plato saith, as ye may rede,
The word mot neede accordè with the dede;”

and declares that between a wife of high degree who misconducts herself and a poor wench there is no difference:

“And, God it wot, my goodè lievè brother,
Men layn that oon as lowe as lyth that other.”

The crow's punishment suggests also much moralizing on restraint in which the tongue ought to be kept.

After the Manciple's Tale we have again an astronomical indication of the time, and an hour named, which was no doubt four o'clock in the afternoon.¹ The Host says to the poor Parson that every man but he hath told his tale (not tales; the scheme of two stories from each pilgrim each way being now clearly abandoned), and he must now tell them a fable. He will tell no fable, he says, for why should he sow chaff when he can sow wheat; but he would willingly give them pleasure, and he will tell them a merry tale in prose—

“To knyht up al this fest, and make an ende;
And Jhesu for his gracē wit me sende
To schewē yow the way, in this viege,
Of thilkē parfyt glorious pilgrimage
That hatte Ierusalem celestial.”

The Parson's Tale is, in fact, a long and earnest sermon in prose, on a text applying the parable of a pilgrimage to man's heavenward journey. The text is from the 6th chapter of Jeremiah, v. 16: “Stand ye in the old ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.”

What need I say more of Chaucer? When he planned this close to the incomplete first part of his great enter-prise, he must have felt that his own pilgrimage of life was near its end; and when he laid down his pen at the last words of the Parson's Tale, “to thilke life he us bring that bought us with his precious blood, Amen,” it was a prayer for himself, the Amen to his own life's work. So shrewd, so simple of cheer, genial and joyous as he was, rich in true humour and wit unattainable by triflers, we have seen how small a part of

The Spirit of
Chaucer.

¹ Of this Sir Harris Nicolas says: “In the Parson's prologue, which introduces the last tale upon the journey to Canterbury, Chaucer has again pointed out to us the time of day, but the hour of the clock is very differently represented in the MSS. In some it is ten, in others two, in most of the best MSS. four, and in one five. According to the phenomena here mentioned, the sun being 29° high, and the length of the shadow to the projecting body as 11 to 6, it was between four and five. As by this reckoning there were at least three hours left to sunset, one does not well see with what propriety the Host admonishes the Parson to haste him because “the sonne wol adoune,” and to be “fructuous in litel space;” and, indeed, the Parson, knowing probably how much time he had good, seems to have paid not the least regard to his admonition; for his tale, if it may so be called, is twice as long as any of the others.”

the great poet was the sprinkling of a form of jest now obsolete. England herself shall have become obsolete when the source of her strength in that spirit which gave life to the works of Chaucer has passed out of date. For there, as we have seen, lies under all the daily cheerfulness of life, a child-like trust in God, a manly conflict against wrong and corruption, reverence for the simple home virtues that made Alcestis, the ideal wife, Queen of Love under Venus, with the modest daisy for her flower; strength of shrewd sense; book-study that does not kill knowledge of the world; kindly and just perception of the characters of men; good-humour, making a clear atmosphere about realities of life, that all have God's will written on some part of them, and tell a man to do his duty.

Chaucer's verse was, like Gower's, perfectly musical. I have already set down what is most necessary to be borne in mind if we would read Gower without marring his lines.¹ The same knowledge will help us also to read Chaucer's English. As before said, poets who wrote for men accustomed to the undue stress laid upon intricate harmonies of rhyme and measure by the troubadours and their successors, must have been very lame poets indeed if they could not count syllables and arrange words so that their accents should fall in the proper places. Many an Adam Scrivener, now in one generation, now in another, has applied his own notions of spelling to the text of Chaucer, but if we had one of the MSS. upon which the poet himself had taken care, as he says in the lines to his own scrivener, "it to correct and eke to rub and scrape," it would show, I believe, that Chaucer's English verse was written with exact regard for nicer rules of euphony than were even imagined by the poets who looked back on him as rugged. The southern tendency to transform vowels of broad sound, still retained in the home speech of the north country, into o, and o into e, was filling the language with words having the common form of a final e as trace of the former various inflexion. This final e was used by English poets as it is still used by French poets, lightly sounded before a consonant to part it from the consonant preceding, and mute before a vowel. Thus "me,"

¹ See pp. 135-137.

being pronounced by Chaucer and Gower as it is pronounced in France, Chaucer rhymed "Rome" and "to me," "tyme" and "by me," a rhyme not infrequent in Gower. Adam Scriveners—here by insertion of a superfluous e, there by omission of a necessary one—have in some degree confused the traces of this method, but they are still clear, and so is Chaucer's use of "ich" before a vowel, "I" before a consonant. In the substance of words there was generally in old English a more distinct sounding of every consonant and vowel than is customary in the English of our own day. The same care has been retained to this day in pronunciation of Italian.

As to its structure, Chaucer lived at court, and his English was that of the court and city. Not only were French words Anglicized, but English words had sometimes the trick of the French tongues in the polite form of their pronunciation. Thus while "tion" made, as in French, two syllables, and words of French origin, still near their source, were accented in the French manner, the French accentuation of the present participle established a stress on the last syllable of such words as "hangýng," "kissýng."

Chaucer's English is mainly that of the Southern Dialect with Midland admixture, but before the end of the fourteenth century resort of men to court and other influences had effaced from the best English of the capital the provincial lines of local distinction. Yet wherever, as in dales of Yorkshire and in rural districts of southern or midland counties that for centuries have been undisturbed by the movements of trade, sons are born and die where their fathers and grandfathers were born and died before them, evidence is still preserved on home-bred tongues of the truth of the fact asserted by a contemporary writer, and witnessed by the old English of contemporary books, that by Chaucer's time there had branched from the Anglo-Saxon stem three dialects of our language. It will help sometimes to the appreciation of old English authors who were not associated with court life, if, to the account of the structure of Anglo-Saxon that has been already given, a sketch be annexed of the three forms of early English into which it passed.¹

¹ The annexed table of the Three Dialects of Early English is chiefly based upon Mr. Richard Morris's grammatical introductions to Hampole's 'Pricke of

The Rev. Richard Garnett¹ made the number of dialects five—Southern, Western, Mercian, Anglian, and Northumbrian, but the additional distinctions are not based upon essential differences of inflexion. The Western does not essentially differ from the Southern and the Anglian is only a variety of the Midland.

The old folios of Chaucer's works were these. They were first collected in 1532, and dedicated to King Henry VIII. by William Thynne, "chefe Clerk of his Kechyn." The Ploughman's Tale (not Chaucer's) was added to the next edition, that of 1542. But the text of Thynne's edition was generally followed in the edition of 1542, in the following editions of 1546, 1555, and in that edited by John Stowe in 1561. Stowe added pieces which had not before been included among Chaucer's works, besides giving Lydgate's 'Siege of Thebes.' The next edition was that of Thomas Speght in 1598, with a Life of Chaucer; and here first appear in the collected works 'Chaucer's Dream,' and 'The Flower and the Leaf.' Speght's Chaucer was reprinted in 1602, with further addition of 'Chaucer's A. B. C.,' and 'Jack Upland,' which is from another hand. The edition of 1602 was reprinted in 1687, and in 1721 the list of the old folios of Chaucer's collected works was closed with an edition by John Urry, with a newly written life, and a glossary by Dr. J. Thomas. This last is the worst, as the first was the best of the early printed texts. William Thynne, as his son Francis said in his 'Animadversions' upon Speght's edition, with earnest desire and love to have Chaucer's works rightly to be published, "not onlye used the helpe of that lerned and eloquent knighte and antiquarye, Sir Briane Tuke, but had also made greate serche for copies to perfecte his woorkes, . . . further had comissione to serche all the liberaries of Englande for Chaucer's works, so that oute of all the Abbies of this Realme [whiche reserved anye monumentes thereof] he was fully furnished with multitude of bookes. Emongst whiche one coppye of some parte of his woorkes came to his handes subscribed in divers places withe *examinatur Chaucer.*"

Of the 'Canterbury Tales' the first edition was a folio from Caxton's press in 1475. Caxton issued in 1481-2 a more accurate edition from a better MS. in the possession of William Thynne. This was reprinted by Wynken de Worde in 1495, and again in 1498 with Lydgate's Treatise of Gods and Goddesses. Two folios of the 'Canterbury Tales' were issued also by Richard Pynson, the first without date (about 1493), the other in 1526. Caxton printed also 'Troilus and Cressida,' and the 'House of Fame.' Wynkyn de Worde printed 'Troilus and Cressida,' and the 'Assembly of Fowls.' Pynson 'Troilus,' and the 'House of Fame.' All folios except Wynkyn de Worde's 'Troilus,' which is a quarto.

Conscience,' to a volume of 'Alliterative Poems,' to a metrical 'Story of Genesis and Exodus,' and to the Kentish 'Ayenbite of Inwit,' also upon a paper by Mr. Edmund Brock on the grammatical forms of Southern English in the 'Ancren Riwe,' Trans. Philological Soc., 1865, pp. 150-168.

¹ 'Philological Essays,' 1859.

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THE HISTORY OF THE

REIGN OF

CHARLES THE FIRST

BY

JOHN BURNET

OF THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

IN TWO VOLUMES

LONDON

Printed by J. Streater, at the Sign of the Gun, in St. Dunstons Church-yard

1679

THE SECOND PART

OF THE FIRST VOLUME

CONTAINING

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CHAPTER VIII.

MIRACLE PLAYS and Mysteries connected with the Liturgy of the Church, and performed at first within the church itself on certain high days of the Calendar, remained Miracle Plays
and Mysteries. a delight of the people from the time of Hilarius in the twelfth century to the time of Chaucer, and were still popular when Shakespeare was a youth. During the two hundred years that elapsed between the Mystery Play, by Hilarius, of the Raising of Lazarus, or his Miracle Play of St. Nicholas,¹ and Chaucer's 'Canterbury Tales,' no essential change had been made, nor was there any important change made afterwards² in the character of these dramatic entertainments. They had soon come to be written for each people in its mother tongue, instead of Latin; even the Cornishmen, as we have seen, had Miracle Plays in Chaucer's time written for them in the old Cymric of Cornwall.³ They were acted outside as well as inside the church; as on a scaffold before the church door, or against the church wall, in the churchyard, for convenience of the huge concourse of spectators. Detached altogether from the church wall, they were also mounted upon scaffolds erected in large fields or plains, or they

¹ See vol. i., pp. 545-52.

² Thomas Warton says ('History of Poetry,' ed. 1824, vol. ii., p. 75): "As these pieces frequently required the introduction of allegorical characters, such as Charity, Sin, Death, Hope, Faith, or the like, and as the common poetry of the times, especially among the French, began to deal much in allegory, at length plays were formed entirely consisting of such personifications. These were called Moralities." Mr. J. P. Collier, in his 'History of the English Drama,' expands Warton's partial error into a distinct theory of the growth of Moralities, and through them of our modern drama, out of Mysteries. This is completely wrong. The Miracle Plays remained a distinct form of entertainment to the time when they went out of use. If there was in any of the later Miracle Plays increase in the number of allegorical characters, they got it from contact with the Moralities which had sprung into independent life, and, as we shall find, traced their descent back rather to the 'Roman de la Rose' than to the Liturgy.

³ See vol. i., p. 748.

were mounted upon wheeled platforms drawn into the marketplace and the open spaces of the streets of towns. The clergy and the choristers, when the plays came outside the churchyard gates, were much aided by laymen in diffusing such knowledge of Scripture history or Church legend as pious monks with a turn for rhyme chose to communicate in this way to the people. There was in Chaucer's time no other dramatic writing, and this was allied rather to the popular ballad than to the imaginative literature of which copies were multiplied for the use of educated readers. Chaucer, therefore,—than whom in later time Shakespeare alone was a greater dramatist,—for want of a fit stage, could only express through metrical tales his masterly perception of the characters of men.

The plays of Hilarius were written to be acted within the church, if at Matins, before the 'Te Deum,' and if at Vespers, before the 'Magnificat.' The next step towards the extension of this manner of teaching we find taken by one of the most ancient of all mystery plays which, with other pieces, comes down to our time in a twelfth century manuscript, erroneously labelled 'Prières en Vers.' It was found by M. Victor Luzarche, while making a catalogue of the town library of Tours,¹ and is a sequence of three Anglo-Norman plays, with Latin stage directions, followed by an Anglo-Norman poem which leads up to the sounding of the last trumpet, and is probably an introduction to a play of the Last Judgment.

The first of the three plays set forth the fall of Adam and Eve; after which "devils shall take them and put them into hell, and they shall make great smoke to rise in it, and cry aloud." The second showed the consequence of the Fall, in Cain's murder of Abel; the end being that "devils coming, Cain is led to hell, being often struck, but they shall take Abel more mildly. Then the Prophets shall be ready, each in a convenient place of concealment," and as they come out and prophesy in turn of Christ, the devils take them also into hell. Evidently this was part or the whole of an Old Testament sequence, of which the purpose was to introduce the Church's

¹ 'Adam, Drame Anglo-Normand du XII^e. Siècle, publié pour la première fois d'après un manuscrit de la Bibliothèque de Tours, par Victor Luzarche.' Tours, 1854.

showing of the mystery of salvation through Christ. This play, as old as the play of Hilarius, and of a date two hundred years before Chaucer, belongs to a time when the clergy were the actors, and is the first recorded instance of their having made use of a scaffold outside the church door. God was represented, as the stage directions show, to come out of the church. The representation also, retaining its connexion with church service, is blended with the hymns of choristers. There was some natural character in the dialogue of these pieces; dramatic life, for example, in the conversation by which the devil tempted Adam.¹ The dialogue, in fact, in these earliest plays might have belonged to the plays still acted at Chester as late as 1577, or at Coventry as late as 1580.

The arrangement of the stage was simple. Out of the heaven of the church, *Figura*—God—passed to Adam in Paradise, upon a stage level with the highest steps of the church door. From that Paradise Adam and Eve were driven down a few steps to the lower stage that represented earth. Below this, nearest to the spectators was hell, an enclosed place in which cries were heard, chains were rattled, and out of which smoke came; out of which also devils came by a door opening into a free space between the scaffolding and the semicircle of the front row of spectators. The devils were also directed now and then to go among the people, and passed round by them sometimes to one of the upper platforms.

In a Latin story of the thirteenth or fourteenth century, we read of persons coming to “a long meadow, in which was collected a very great multitude of men, now silent, now to be heard laughing. Wondering, therefore, why there was so great a congregation of people in such a place, they supposed that the spectacles we call Mysteries were there being celebrated.”² When the plays were spoken in Latin it was necessary that they should tell their story clearly to the eye, and the animation of a dumb show remained by them after they were acted in the language of the people. If it be true, not only that the Chester

¹ See an interesting criticism on this play by Adolf Ebert, in the ‘*Göttingische gelehrte Anzeigen*,’ for Feb. 14, 1856.

² Quoted by Mr. Thomas Wright in Preface to the ‘*Chester Plays*,’ edited for the Shakespeare Society in 1843.

Plays were written by Ralph Higden, about 1328 (the year of Chaucer's birth); but that he went, as a note on one of the MSS. says that he did, three times to Rome to get leave to write them in the language of the people, then we may assume that these holy-day entertainments were first acted in English during Chaucer's childhood. But there was no reason why the Pope's leave should be asked upon the matter; and, no doubt, in England as in France, the people had their Miracle Plays represented to them in their own language for at least three generations before Chaucer.

In the 'Miller's Tale' we have read of jolly Absalon the parish clerk that

"Sometime to shew his lightness and maistrie¹
He plaieth Herode on a skaffold hie,"

that being the character adorned in finest clothes; and in the same tale Nicholas, when he is persuading the Carpenter of the coming of another flood, refers not to Genesis, but to the Miracle Play of the Flood, which he recals by reference to its popular comic scene.

"Hastow not herd (quod Nicholas) also
The sorwe of Noe with his felawship,
Or that he mighte get his wif to schip."

When these plays came to be used, as they were in England, for the purpose of giving, after a fashion, the whole Bible story to the apprehension of a rude people, so that during a long summer's day play followed play from the Creation downward, it was necessary to sustain attention by some blending of homely jest with all the seriousness. Certain points in the story seem to have been conventionally taken for this purpose, and one jesting place was made by giving a temper of her own to Noah's wife. Thus in the Chester play of Noah's Flood, God having declared his intention, and commanded Noah to build the ark, he and his family bring hatchets, nails, timber, and hammer,² Japhet's wife gathering chips to make a fire and cook their

¹ Art or skill. Corrupted to another use of the word mystery, in guilds, for the art exercised in a trade.

² Slyche. Mr. Wright, in his edition of the 'Chester Plays,' interprets this word conjecturally, "plaster." It means a hammer; in Anglo-Saxon, slice.

dinners while they are at work. Then Noah builds the ark; but while he is at work his wife declares that she will not go in until she sees more need. The ark has been hammered at and is supposed to be made. Then God orders the taking in of the beasts, clean and unclean. They are shown in a painting spread over the boards of the ark, as Noah and his family, except his wife, go in, reciting in turn a rhyming list of animals that are come in with them. Then cries Noah,

“Wife come in! Why standes thou there?
Thou art ever froward, I dare well swear;
Come in, on Godes name! half time it were,
For fear lest that we drown.”¹

But the wife will not go in unless she may take all her gossips with her.

“Yea, sir, set up your sail
And row forth with evil hail,
For withouten fail
I will not out of this town:
But I have my gossips every echone
One foot farther I will not gone;
They shall not drown, by Saint John,
An I may save their life!
They loven me full well, by Christ!
But thou let them into thy chest,
Else row now where thee leiste
And get thee a new wife.

Noah. Shem, son, lo! Thy mother is wrawe;
By God, such another I do not knawe!

Shem. Father, I shall fetch her in, I trow,
Withouten any fail.
Mother, my father after thee send
And bids thee unto yeinder ship wend.
Look up and see the wind,
For we ben ready to sail.

Noah's Wife. Shem, go again to him, I say;
I will not come therein to-day.

Ham. Shall we all fetch her in?

Noah. Yea, sons, in Christe blessing and mine!
I would you hied you betime
For of this Flood I am in doubt.”

But Noah's wife all this while sits obstinate among her gossips,

¹ ‘Chester Plays,’ ed. Shakespeare Society, 1843, pp. 52, 53. As the date of the MS. is 1592, to avoid useless confusion I quote without retaining an old spelling which is not coeval with the text.

and as her sons advance to her the other women join with her in the

Good Gossips' Song.

"The Flood comes flitting in full fast
On every side that spreads full far;
For fear of drowning I am aghast;
Good Gossips, let us draw near
And let us drink or we depart.
For oftentimes we have done so;
For at a draught thou drinks a quart,
And so will I do or I go.
Here is a pottle full of Malmsey good and strong,
It will rejoice both heart and tongue;
Though Noah think us never so long,
Here we will drink alike."

Now the three sons have come to their mother, and says Japheth,

"Mother, we pray you all together,
For we are here, your owne children,
Come with the ship for fear of the weather
For his love that you bought!

Noah's Wife. That will I not, for all your call,
But I have my gossips all."

Now her three sons lay hands on her and haul her in; Shem saying,

"In faith, mother, yet you shall,
Whether thou wilt or not."

As she is pulled in at the door, Noah says to her, "Welcome wife into this boat;" upon which she gives him a box on the ears, answering, "Have then that for thy note" (noddle), and Noah cries

"Ha! . . . ha! . . . Marry this is hot!
It is good for to be still."

This then is what Chaucer meant by the

"Sorwe of Noe with his felawship
Or that he mighte get his wif to schip."

And of such sort was the broad practical jest with which the clergy interspersed the sacred story to maintain lively and pleased attention to it among their unlettered audiences.

The passing of these Miracle Plays from the church nave into the churchyard is connected with the rise of the first fairs.

Indeed, the players' booths at the fair, on which the favourite droll of 'Jephthah's Rash Vow' was acted in Bartholomew Fair at least as late as 1733, are descended even in a more direct line than the greater theatres from the Scripture lessons, or Acts of the Apostles or Saints, that were really acted on high days and holidays, instead of being simply read at their appointed place in the Liturgy, before the 'Te Deum' or the 'Magnificat.'

A great church or abbey made much of the festival day of its own patron saint. On that day, especially, its miracles were worked; on that day above others it was possible to attract worshippers from all parts, to bring offerings and honour to its shrine. If the saint was in high repute, the crowd of worshippers gathered about the shrine was often more than could be lodged in the small adjacent town or village, and the tents of those encamped at first in, afterwards—when that had again and again been forbidden—about the churchyard, were the first booths of the fair. The whole saint's day was holy, and to be spent about the shrine. The day before was for coming, and the day after for going. Hence the customary three days of a fair. In days of insecure travel, and little help to traffic by exchange of commodity between persons living far apart from one another, the concourse of men from many parts suggested use of these religious meetings as occasions also for exchange of produce and extension of trade. Hence the trade of the fair. To add to the attraction of their saint's day, and to satisfy the eyes of all who came, the clergy acted their saint's Miracle Play, or other plays, not only inside the church, but also on a platform outside, and so it was that the Miracle Plays or Mysteries passed out through the church porch, and came to be a common entertainment of the people.¹ Then also the guilds, that were formed in England

¹ This subject I have dwelt upon with much detail in chaps. i-vi. of 'Memoirs of Bartholomew Fair,' which shew also the long continuance of entertainments that retained much of the form of the old Miracle Play. In some parts of Europe these plays are still to be seen, as of old. The most famous is the 'Mystery of the Passion,' played every ten years at Ober Ammergau, in Upper Bavaria, on twelve Sundays between April and October. A writer describing it in an October number of the 'Pall Mall Gazette' for 1866, says that a performance in presence of about six thousand spectators seated in the open air, lasted "from eight in the morning till six in the

as early as the eleventh century, had each its saint; and laymen, who had occasionally been called to help the clergy, were tempted on the saints' days of their guilds, and other great religious holidays, to turn their organization to account in the production of a sacred pageant of their own. The plays were written in the monasteries, for edification of the many; and the Church could have no reason for discouraging an emulation that caused laymen to spend money, time, and skill upon the fit and frequent presentation of them to the people. Every corporation had once a year its own particular saint's day, on which its members worshipped and dined together, while there was usually also one religious festival kept as a common holiday by all guilds of a town. At the guild dinners, probably, in the first instance, the men of a trade played the story of their saint by way of interlude or mask. Such entertainments of theirs might then have passed out of the dining hall into the street, where they brought honour to the corporation, and perhaps paid part of their expense in money collected from among the lookers-on.

The oldest references to out-of-door plays of this kind are to stories from the lives of saints, and not to Bible mysteries. The oldest reference is that of Matthew Paris to the play of St. Katherine, acted, before A.D. 1119, by the pupils of Geoffrey, Abbot of St. Alban's at Dunstable.¹ Fitzstephen also, referring, between 1170 and 1182, to the open representation of these plays among the Londoners, says that, instead of ancient shows of the theatre, London had "entertainments of a more devout kind, either representations of those miracles which were wrought by holy confessors, or those passions and sufferings in

evening, with one interval of an hour for dinner, and another of a second hour caused by a sudden storm." He reports also that at the death of Christ on the Cross, with the words "It is finished," "the sternest Protestants are said to be carried away, and to join their tears to the sobbing and weeping that breaks out through the entire assemblage." A friend who witnessed a French Miracle Play in Switzerland some years ago, found in it passages of a rudeness that resembled gross irreverence. Thus, after the "Passion," came a scene in heaven, where two angels awaken God with the words,

"Pere éternel, lève toi ! n'as tu vergogne !

Ton fils est mort, et tu dors comme un ivrogne !"

¹ See vol. i., p. 551.

which the martyrs so rigidly displayed their fortitude." Two groups of topics are here specified in a formal description, and they exclude the subjects drawn from Scripture history. Moreover the fact that, in opposition to the rule in France, Miracle Play remained in England the popular name for these entertainments, even when they had come to be almost exclusively Mysteries, corroborates the evidence that the plays so acted among the people were, for a time, only the legendary lives and deaths of saints and martyrs.¹

In the middle of the thirteenth century, in the 'Manuel des Pechiéz,' translated by Robert of Brunne as 'the Handlyng Sinne' when Chaucer was a child, it was accounted sin in the clergy to assist at any other plays than those which belonged to the Liturgy, and were acted in the church at Easter and Christmas. Especially it was forbidden to assist anywhere in plays acted in church-yards, streets or green places. Here, then, is indication of a separation of the offshoot from the parent stem. But the separation was imperfect. In 1378 the scholars or choristers of St. Paul's Cathedral petitioned Richard II. to prohibit the acting of the History of the Old Testament to the great prejudice of the clergy of the Church, who had spent considerable sums for a public representation of Old Testament plays at the ensuing Christmas.² It was the Church, also, that soon after the 'Manuel des Pechiéz' was written, gave the most vigorous impulse to the bringing of the Mysteries themselves into the street.

In 1264 Pope Urban IV. founded the feast of Corpus Christi, in honour of the consecrated Host; an institution firmly established by Pope Clement V. in the year 1311. Thenceforth it became for the clergy a high festival day, still notable in Rome for its pomps, and distinguished from other church feasts by a procession in which the people took part with the clergy. Thus the participating guilds came to regard Corpus Christi as their

¹ These two observations and others that follow were made by Professor Adolf Ebert, whose papers in the *Jahrbuch für Romanische und Englische Literatur* on the 'English Mysteries,' vol. i., pp. 44-82, 131-70, and on the oldest 'Italian Mysteries,' vol. v., pp. 51-79, are the best that have been written on this form of literature.

² Malone's 'Shakespeare,' quoted in Collier's 'Annals of the Stage.'

common festival. Rivalling each other in display of wealth for the adornment of the great procession, they carried pictures and images of saints and persons of Scripture; and they also attired living representatives of the Virgin in her silver crown, the angel Gabriel carrying a lily stalk, the twelve Apostles, each labelled with his name upon his cap, or Saint Katherine with an attendance of eight maidens. It was an easy step from the parade of these persons, already dressed in character, to their employment in dramatic presentation of a sacred story. Thus it was that, not only in England, but in Spain also, with which England then had little communication of ideas, the feast of Corpus Christi became the great festival of sacred drama.

In Spain the *autos* (actus) *sacramentales* of the Corpus Christi days were religious street-plays that remained a popular form of the Spanish drama even in its best days. When Shakespeare was writing for England, Lope de Vega raised these Corpus Christi street-plays to their highest note in Spain, and they were suppressed with difficulty in the middle of the eighteenth century. To the last the Spaniards took them seriously, knelt, smote their breasts and cried "Meâ Culpâ!" when St. Anthony on the stage repeated his *Confiteor*.¹

But if sacred plays were to be acted, the right theme for a festival of Corpus Christi, the feast of the Christian Church, would be the story of the Church, the mystery of its relation to humanity from the Creation to the life and death of Christ, the Resurrection, and the Day of Judgment. This festival, so closely associated with the Mysteries of Faith, was always held on the first Thursday after Trinity Sunday. Trinity Sunday being eight weeks after Easter, Corpus Christi was a holiday of brightest summer time, when plays were welcome in the streets and meadows. Such use of the more sacred mysteries being once freely admitted, they would be as welcome and as fit means of out-of-door edification in the fine weather of Whitsuntide. Clerical poets who had no scruple about making Noah swear by St. John, produced sequences of plays, showing what seemed to them to be the chief features in the scheme of Christianity from the beginning to the end of this world.

¹ Ticknor's 'History of Spanish Literature,' ed. 1863, vol. ii., p. 249.

Such sequences, of which three are still preserved, were in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries acted at Chester, Coventry, Wakefield, York, Newcastle, Lancaster, Preston, Kendal, Wymondham, Dublin, and other places. The sequence of Mysteries written for one town would be used at others. Each neighbourhood which had produced no dramatist of its own, and wished to mount a series of Mysteries, might choose its set from among those which it knew to be in use. When the trade guilds of any place undertook to celebrate a yearly festival with a complete series of Scripture Mysteries, each guild had its allotted play or pageant, and, barring a few transfers and readjustments, spent its energies year after year exclusively upon the attractive presentation of that one pageant alone.

The parish clerks of London formed themselves into a harmonic guild (chartered in 1233), and their music was sought at the funerals and entertainments of the great. In the year 1390, when Chaucer was at work or soon about to be at work upon the *Canterbury Tales*, they played interludes in the fields at Skinner's Well for three days; Richard II., with his queen and court, being among the spectators. Again, in 1409, in the reign of Henry IV., the clerks played at Skinner's Well for eight days, "matter from the Creation of the World," a great assembly of the noblemen of England being present. The parish clerk of old, deacon in orders, Chaucer has painted as a jolly Absalon, in a white surplice, with curly hair, red stockings and fashionable shoes. He could bleed, clip and shave, write title-deeds and receipts, dance, sing, play the guitar, drink, go with a censer on a holiday, and when he censured the parish wives look at them lovingly. Herod suited the fine lady's man, as being the character that was most pompous in speech and most magnificently dressed. A high scaffold, doubtless, was the stage used by the parish clerks of London at their (Clerken) Well, about which the spectators stood and sat upon the rising ground.

The oldest series of English Mysteries that set forth "matter from the Creation of the World" to Doomsday are the plays acted in Chester at Whitsuntide. According to the proclamation for the holding of these plays made in the

*The Chester
Plays.*

year 1533,¹ they were devised "of old time" "by one Sir Henry Francis, some time monk of this monastery dissolved," who got of Pope Clement a thousand days of pardon, and of the Bishop of Chester at that time forty days of pardon for every one

"resorting in peaceable manner and with good devotion to hear and see the said plays from time to time as oft as they shall be played within the said city . . . which plays were devised to the honour of God by John Arnway, then mayor of this city of Chester, his brethren, and the whole commonalty thereof to be brought forth, declared and played, at the cost and charges of the craftsmen and occupations of the said city, which hitherunto have from time to time used and performed the same accordingly."

A note, written in a later hand, adds to the MS. copy of this proclamation made at the end of the sixteenth century, that Sir John Arnway was mayor of Chester in 1327-8, at which time these plays were written by Randal Higgenet, a monk of Chester Abbey, and played openly in Whitsun week. Randal Higgenet is one of the corruptions of the name of Randulph or Ralph Higden, author of the 'Polychronicon.'² He was a West of England man who joined the Benedictines of St. Werburgh in Chester about the year 1299 and died, at a good old age, probably in 1363.³ There were in the Chester series twenty-four plays, distributed among the twenty-four companies of the city, and Archdeacon Rogers, who saw them acted in 1594 according to old usage, says⁴ that they played the first nine on Whit Monday, the next nine on Tuesday, and the remaining seven on Wednesday, and that

"the places where they played them were in every street. They began first at the Abbey gates, and when the first pageant was played, it was wheeled to the high cross before the Mayor, and so to every street; and so every street had a pageant playing before them at one time, till all the pageants for the day appointed were played: and when one pageant was near ended word was brought from street to street, that so they might come in place thereof, exceeding orderly."

There were scaffolds erected for spectators in those places,

¹ Harleian MS., No. 2013.

² See vol. i. p. 712.

³ P. xi. of the Introduction to 'Polychronicon Ranulphi Higden,' edited by Churchill Babington, B.D., London, 1865, in series of 'Chronicles and Memorials of Great Britain and Ireland during the Middle Ages.'

⁴ MS. Harleian, No. 1948, fol. 48. Quoted in Sharp's 'Dissertation on Pageants.'

to which the successive pageants would be drawn; and a citizen who on the first day saw in any place the first pageant, that of the Fall of Lucifer, if he kept his place and returned to it in good time on each successive morning, would see the Scripture story, as thus told, pass in its right order before him. Each pageant was drawn on four or six wheels, and had a room, in which the actors and properties were concealed, under the upper room or stage on which they played. Thus, in the

Chester Plays,

first came the pageant of the Tanners, who set forth the Fall of Lucifer; that of the Drapers followed, with the Creation and Fall, and the Death of Abel,—in which Eve was made out of the rib of Adam, and Adam and Eve were shown naked on the stage until they put on fig-leaves. As women's parts were played by men or boys, Eve, at least, must have had nakedness represented by a dress. One of the dramatic effects usually connected in old Mysteries with the play of the Creation was to represent the creation of beasts by unloosing and sending among the crowd as great a variety of strange animals as could be brought together, and to create the birds by sending up a flight of pigeons. When that pageant went to the next station, the Water Leaders and the drawers of Dee came with their pageant of Noah's Flood, in which Noah's wife gave so much trouble to her husband. This was followed by the Histories of Lot and Abraham, played by the Barbers and Wax-chandlers. Care was taken by the inventor to point out, through an "Expositor," at the end of the show of Abraham's faith, that

"This deed you see done here in this place,
An example of Jesu done it was," &c.

Passing from this into a prayer beginning "Such obedience grant us, O Lord;" after which the messenger says,

"Make room lordings and give us way,
And let Balak come in and play,
And Balaam that well can say
To tell you of prophesy."

The Cappers and Linen Drapers played the tale of 'Balaam and his Ass,' which begins with God speaking to Moses on Mount Sinai, and the giving of the Commandments. Then Balak was seen riding towards the mountain, and that part of the story was presented. Balaam's ass is called Burnell, the Brunellus of logic and satire, and is represented by a man made to have the appearance of an ass; and when all this story, in which Balaam blesses by prophecy of Christ, has also been presented, again "the Doctor speaketh."

The Chester series now comes at once to the Birth of our Lord, and represents in successive pageants the Salutation and Nativity, including Emperor Octavian and the Sybil's prophecy of Christ, popular in the

middle ages, with some additional narrative and comment by "the Expositor," and 'the Play of the Shepherds,' in and out of England the accepted opportunity for rustic jesting. Here no expositor appears; but three shepherds make merry together, open their satchels, and joining their suppers in a feast, eat hot meat with Lancashire bannocks, and drink Alton ale. They blow their horns for the comic lad, the ragged Trowle, who sings, but declares their meat too dirty to be eaten, and will have none of it till they give him his wages. They wrestle in sport with him and he throws all three. While they sit to rest after their sport the star appears, by which they are impressed religiously. But when an angel presently has sung 'Gloria in excelsis,' their sense of reverence in the first comment upon the singing rapidly passes into the usual burlesque, with questioning whether he sang 'Glorē, glare with a glee,' or 'Glory, glory with a glo,' or 'Glori, glory, glorious;' whether he was a spy who came to steal their sheep; and so forth. They note "how he sang selsis," how he "touched on terre," and "pax also may not be blamed." Indeed, says the second shepherd,

"He had a much better voice than I have
As in heaven all others have so."

Finally they go to Bethlehem, and sing their adoration to the infant Christ, offering him, one a bell, another a flasket and a spoon "to eat thy pottage withal at noon," the third shepherd a cap, and Trowle, too poor to do better, a pair of his wife's old breeches. After these, and gifts also by four boys, the shepherds depart, singing in pious mood, to spend their lives in worship. They give each other before going the Christian kiss of peace, one telling another that he knows not where there is such another shepherd "from London to Louth."

In the next pageant—that of the Three Kings—the kings and Herod speak, at meeting, their first words of compliment in the court language, French. Because French was the language of the English court, the Chester playwright once or twice mimics life with a dash of it in royal talk. In the play of the Salutation, Emperor Octavian had also a few lines of French assigned to him. Herod sends for a doctor, the chief of his clergy, to look up the books of prophecy; and through his exposition, interrupted by the angry speeches of Herod, there is more instruction given to the hearers. The next play is 'the Offerings of the Three Kings,' after which follows the 'Slaughter of the Innocents.' Rude jesting certainly was not intended in the scolding of the mothers at the brutal soldiers, nor in their rough insolence. The spectators saw a homely picture of merciless oppression and wild natural passion. The killing of only two children is shown upon the stage. The second being one that has Herod himself for its father there is an appeal to Herod, who, after wrath at his own child's murder, dies on the stage in pain. He is then fetched by a demon, who takes the opportunity to tell the citizens that they who give false measure will bear that lord company. At the end of this play Joseph and Mary go down to Egypt.

Then follow the pageants of the Purification, the Temptation and the Woman taken in Adultery (these two being one play), which ends with a Doctor's exposition. The next play, that of 'Lazarus,' opens

with our Lord giving sight to the blind, and His vanishing from among the Jews who would stone Him, setting all this forth not less fully than the raising of Lazarus. The Entry into Jerusalem, Christ Betrayed, the Passion, the Crucifixion, the Harrowing of Hell (from the apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemus), the Resurrection, the Pilgrims of Emmaus, the Ascension, and the Sending of the Holy Ghost, are successively shown in the next pageants. Then there appear in a pageant Ezekiel, Zachariah, Daniel, and John the Evangelist, who tell visions of theirs which an "Expositor" stands by to expound to the people. They are Ezekiel's vision of dry bones, prefiguring Doomsday; Zachariah's four chariots out of two hills, signifying four kinds of saints,—martyrs, confessors, converts, virgins; Daniel's vision of four winds and four beasts, prefiguring Doomsday and Antichrist. The Expositor instructs the people concerning John's two witnesses Enoch and Elias, his prophecy of Antichrist, and of the fifteen signs that shall come before the Judgment Day. Thus prefaced there follow the last two pageants, which are those of Antichrist and of the Day of Judgment. Antichrist, claiming to be Christ, dies on the stage, is buried, and rises to life again; whereby he wins worship until Enoch and Elias come to expose him to the deluded kings, and to destroy his errors. They call on him to shew that the dead he has raised can eat, and, when he assents to the trial, give them bread blessed in the name of Jesus, which they dare not touch. The kings of the earth then turn to the true Christ. Antichrist slays them with a sword, he slays also Enoch and Elias before he returns towards his chair of state, but there he is met by the Archangel Michael, who with a sword kills him. Antichrist dies, calling upon Satan and Lucifer. Two demons come for him, Enoch and Elias rise again, and are taken by Michael into heaven, while an angel sings *Gaudete, justi, in Domino*.

The last of the five-and-twenty pageants, Doomsday, then opens with Christ as God, Alpha and Omega, sending the angels to blow the last trumpet. The dead rise and speak. First the saved speak: a pope who has been purged in Purgatory of his sins of negligence; an emperor who describes also his cleansing in pains of Purgatory for a thousand years; a king whom only contrition at the last and almsdeed saved from hell; a queen also who had neither prayed nor fasted, but had lived in luxury, and was saved only by almsdeed, by repentance at the close of life, and pains of Purgatory. Then speak the damned. A pope who was in life covetous, who prospered by silver and simony, has account to give of all souls that were lost while he held rule. After him speak next the damned emperor, and king, and queen. After them a justice who is damned because he furthered the false cause of the rich who gave him silver, troubled the poor, and robbed the church. Lastly, there speaks a merchant, who oppressed the poor to make them part with their lands, a thousand times swore falsely to win by false dealings, was a usurer, and never went to church. After these laments, Jesus descends as in a cloud, angels showing His cross, His crown of thorns, the lance and other instruments. As He addresses the assembled souls, blood flows afresh from His side. The saved, speaking through Pope, Emperor, King and Queen, call to him, and are accepted, for

“In great thirst you gave me drink,
 When I was naked also clothing,
 And when me needed harbouring
 You harboured me in cold ;
 And other deeds to my liking,
 You did on earth there living,
 Therefore you shall be quit that thing
 In heaven an hundred fold.”

They answer according to the text ‘Lord when saw we thee an hungered,’ and are replied to with a paraphrase of our Lord’s answer, ‘Inasmuch as ye did it unto the least of these, ye did it unto me.’ The angels conduct with song the blessed souls to heaven. Then the demons come, and are the accusers of the wicked Pope and Emperor, and of the King and Queen, who

“would never know
 Poorë men them alms to show,”

and of the rest of the evil who are to be parted from the good and put into great torment. They are told by the Last Judge that they are condemned, and that the prayers of His mother and all the saints would be too late to help them. Then is repeated the condemnation “When I was hungry and thirsty,” with the question and the answer,

“Nay when you saw the least of mine
 That on earth suffered pine . . . ”

So they are condemned and taken away by the demons. After this the Evangelists come forward and bear witness that as their Gospels have warned all to save their souls and shown the way to heaven, there is no excuse for those who do amiss.

These plays, it will have been seen, are in eight-syllabled verse. In the opening pageant of the Fall of Lucifer alternate rhyming is predominant, otherwise the general metre is the ballad metre of Chaucer’s ‘Rhyme of Sir Thopas,’ with triplets in place of the couplets. It forms eight-lined stanzas, consisting of two triplets of rhyme, with a third rhyme thus arranged, each rhyme being represented by a letter, a, a, a, c, b, b, b, c. Sometimes both triplets have the same rhyme, making the form a, a, a, c, a, a, a, c. Taking two lines as one, the usual metre of the Chester Plays will fall into a popular four-lined ballad stanza with rhymes at the cesura. Thus—

Eve.

“Ah, Lord, this tree is fair and bright, green and seemly to my sight,
 The fruit sweet and full of might, that gods it may us make :
 One apple of it I will eat, to assay which is the meat,
 And my husband I will get one morsel for to take.”

There is occasional dramatic use of some other metre, as in a shepherd's song or in bombast of Herod, but this is, as a rule, the metre of the Chester Plays.

There are several MSS. of the Chester Mysteries, none early. A MS. belonging to the Duke of Devonshire is dated 1581. A MS. once possessed by Mr. Heber was dated 1592. The two MSS. in the British Museum are dated 1600 and 1607; that at Oxford is dated 1604. A specimen of these Chester Mysteries was printed in 1818 by Mr. Markland for the members of the Roxburghe Club, and in 1831 these and other Mysteries, then unpublished, were described by Mr. Collier in his *History of Dramatic Literature*, but the only complete publication of them has been that made for the Shakespeare Society in 1843, when they were edited by Mr. Thomas Wright.

Though not remarkable for wit or poetry, they brought, in rude popular verse, the scriptural teaching of a thoroughly religious mind home to the people. The comic interludes occurred in appointed places, but the whole teaching of these plays was devoutly earnest. There is one misplaced jest in the serious close of the *Shepherds' Play*; misplaced according to the notions which in England evidently prevailed among Mystery writers. In the *Wakefield (Towneley)* series, by far the cleverest of the three that have come down to us, there are dramatic touches of natural poetry, and interludes of bold and hearty farce, but even here the jesting of the *Shepherds' Play* is not allowed to cross the threshold of the stable in which the infant Christ is laid. The other series, called the *Coventry*, is altogether serious, except for a familiar treatment of one incident in the story of the Virgin Mary to whom it clearly was the purpose of the writer to pay special honour.

In England, I repeat, as in Germany, the chief interest of these plays was tragic; even the more so, in their actual representation, for the homeliness that sought to realise to the illiterate the sense of every incident. They were the living '*Biblia Pauperum*.' It does not appear that in France all the trades of a town combined to carry out this form of the work of bringing home that mediæval reading of the Bible to the common people. In France the sequences of plays seem to have been shorter,

being produced by a single corporation, civil or religious. In France also the use of three stages, one above another, to represent heaven, earth and hell,—a custom followed in none of these English plays—kept the devils present to the eye, and nearest also to the audience, when they had no real part in the action of the scene diverting attention by irrelevant gesticulation. Thus they degenerated into drolls. But in our English plays devils only appeared when there was God to be resisted, man to be warned or tempted, or a sinner to be dragged to hell. The whole endeavour was to make them terrible.

In the Netherlands such Peasant comedies as that of which the Shepherds' Play preceding the Nativity was an example were acted in the market-place on Saturday between Good Friday and Easter Sunday. On Good Friday the scenes of the Passion were represented in the church, on Easter Day the Resurrection, and out of doors on the intervening Saturday there came into the throng of the fair that gathered about every great church celebration, criers who sold salves to women dressed as the three Maries, while, always with some ultimate reference to the sacred time, there were acted in the open market Peasant comedies with thumping and abuse.¹ So when the Nativity was acted in church on Christmas morning, the Shepherds' plays may have been at their beginning acted out of doors on Christmas-eve.

¹ 'Altteütsche Schauspiele. Herausgegeben von Franz Joseph Mone. Quedlenberg und Leipzig, 1841.' [Bd. xxi. of 'Bibliothek der gesammten deutschen National Literatur.'] This includes a German play of the 'Resurrection' from a MS. of 1391. I may add that a *Ludus Paschalis de Adventu et Interitu Antichristi*, by Wernhers von Tegernsee, is of the 12th century, the oldest piece of the kind extant in German. Printed by Pez in 'Thesaur. Noviss. Anecdote.' ii. 185, *et seq.* In Italy the oldest mention of a Mystery play is in a MS. of the *Regimines Paduæ*, which notes a solemn representation of the Passion and Resurrection of Christ in 1244, in the open air of the Prà della Valle. The oldest Italian Mystery Play known to be extant was found by Signor Palermo among the MSS. of the Palatine Library at Florence. It is in two parts, called 'Devozioni,' and was played within the church on Thursday and Good Friday, the preacher in his sermon explaining the action by which it was illustrated. The MS. is dated, 'Here ends the Devozion of Good Friday, 1375,' but the character and dialect of the play point to an origin in the first half of the 14th century. 'Palermo, I Manoscritti Palatini,' T. ii., p. 459, quoted through Ebert in Bd. v., pp. 51-79 of 'Jahrbuch für Romanische und Englische Literatur.'

The Wakefield (or Woodkirk) Mysteries were first printed by the Surtees Society in 1836¹ as the Towneley Mysteries, so called because the only MS. in which they are contained belonged to the library collected by the Towneley family at Towneley Hall in Lancashire. The library was sold in 1814 and 1815, and this MS. passed out of the possession of the Towneley family, but was recovered by it before 1822, when Mr. Peregrine Edward Towneley printed from it the 'Judicium'—Doomsday—as his contribution to the Roxburghe Club.

There is no sufficient reason why these plays should be named not, like the Chester and Coventry, after the town for which they may have been written, but after somebody who happens to possess a copy of them. When the MS. was described by Mr. Douce for the sale in 1814 he said, on grounds not stated, that it was supposed to have "formerly belonged to the Abbey of Widkirk near Wakefield in the county of York." Afterwards, in an introduction written by him for the Doomsday, Mr. Douce said it was supposed to have belonged to the Abbey of Whalley; this guess probably being substituted because he could find no such place as Widkirk. In the preface to the edition for the Surtees Society it is pointed out that Mr. Douce must have had some old written authority for his first supposition, because, although there is no such place as Widkirk near Wakefield, and never was an Abbey of Widkirk in England, there is, four miles north of Wakefield, Woodkirk, where there used to be a cell of Augustinian Canons, which was established in the first half century after the Conquest, and dependent on the great house of St. Oswald at Nostel. Moreover Henry I. granted the canons of Nostel a charter for two fairs to be held at Woodkirk, one at the Feast of the Assumption, the other at the Feast of the Nativity of the Virgin, a grant confirmed by King Stephen. In Henry VIII.'s time the tolls and stallage of these fairs yielded more than a fourth of the yearly revenues of the house. Mr. Hunter adds that, although the Mysteries in this collection differ among one another, and perhaps were from different

¹ 'The Towneley Mysteries.' Surtees Society, 1836. Edited by the Secretary of the Society, Mr. James Raine. The Preface by Mr. J. Hunter.

hands, some original, others from similar collections elsewhere,—Cæsar Augustus, Pharaoh, and the Annunciation containing no trace of a Yorkshire dialect,—in some, of which the language is that of common life and country clowns, the dialect is unmistakably Northern. In the Death of Abel and the two plays here given to the shepherds watching in the fields, who heard the “gloria” sung in the heavens, especially in the second of them, “few persons,” he says, “who have had any opportunities of hearing the language of the rural population of the West Riding of Yorkshire can fail to trace it.”¹

The MS. also contains indications of locality in the inscription ‘Wakefelde.Berkers’ (Tanners), at the head of the first of the pageants, and Wakefield again, without the name of a trade at the head of the third pageant. Three other of the pageants Abel, Pharaoh, and the appearance of Jesus to Luke and Cleophas, are marked with the name of a trade that acted them without note of a place. As Woodkirk itself could have had no guilds, the inference is obvious that the trades of Wakefield were the actors of these plays. In the second play of the Shepherds, one of them says he has searched Horbery Shroggs. Horbury is a village two or three miles south-west of Wakefield, and Shroggs is a northern term for a rough open, overgrown with brushwood.

The Wakefield Mysteries

are a series of thirty-two. Eight of them are from the Old Testament, and four-and-twenty from the New. The first play is of the Creation. Here, between the creations of the fifth and sixth day, God having withdrawn, Lucifer takes his seat, claiming to be master of the new-made world. Before the return of God he takes a flight, while fallen angels lament the joys lost through pride. Lucifer returns after the creation of Adam and Eve, resolved to cast them out of Paradise; and at this point four leaves of the MS. seem to be lost.

¹ These examples are given :—“Umbithynke thee what thou sayse,” “æther,” “Let it be,” “be pease your dyn;” “hoille,” “go forth, greyn horne,” “Leming,” as a cow’s name; “here my hend” (hand), “other-gates,” “a craw to pluck,” “lig” (lie), “mon” (must), “fun” (found), “pik” (pitch), “sam,” “dedir,” “skelp,” “bir,” “mydyng,” “chylde,” “barne” (bosom), “kyn,” “kythe and kyn,” “near hand,” “balk,” “whet hir whystyll,” “lake,” “threpe,” “eaten out of house and harbour,” “what alys thee;” not all peculiar to the West Riding, but “more frequently to be heard there than in any other district.”

The second pageant is that of the Death of Abel, which opens with the entry of Cain's boy (Garcio—garçon), who addresses the people as "a mery lad." Cain, formed upon the coarsest model of a Yorkshire ploughman, enters shouting to his plough-team, and, after a short rough dialogue with his man, gives a coarse greeting to Abel when he enters. Abel reasons. Cain reviles, and will not leave his plough to go to make offering, till after much persuasion. Abel offers with short pious prayer. Avaricious Cain grudgingly counts over his sheaves that he may look out for God the one he is least unwilling to part with. He contemns God in bold language, and his brother too, when the grudging sacrifice smokes without burning. Then Abel is slain. God calls to Cain, who thinks it of no use to ask for mercy. He summons his boy, Pyke-harnes: when he comes, tells him there is a pudding in the pot, buffets him, and cries the King's peace for himself and the lad, who caps with burlesque each line that he utters. Finally he threatens the boy roughly if he do not mind the plough, and goes away to hide himself, with a farewell to the public; whom he tells that he must needs be thrall to the devil, world without end. The mediæval Yorkshire rustic, seeing this play, found in Cain what he thoroughly understood to be an ill-conditioned fellow and a hopeless reprobate.

The third pageant is of Noah, who opens it with a long prayer. God, replying at length, repents that He has made man, and commands the ark to be built. After this, Noah goes home to his wife, who scolds him for having been so long away from home, complains of poverty, and tells him that he is worthy to be clad in Stafford blue, for he is always dreading something. She scolds on, and he threatens to beat her. She retorts, and he cries, "Have at thee, Gill!" She strikes again, and has the worst of a short fight. Then he proceeds, old and stiff of bone, to the ark-building. His sons presently help to carry his goods in, but his wife will not stir. In this play she is resolved first to do some spinning. Noah and his three sons' wives urge her to notice the overcast sky and the rain, but her answer is still

"In fayth yet wille I spyn,
Alle in vayn ye carp."

"This spindle will I slip, upon this hill, ere I stir a foot." He threatens her with the whip. She answers that his great words shall not fray her. He threatens on, and she provokes him with her tongue. Presently there is another fight between them. The wife cries out "Alas!" and is beaten blue, but Noah lies undermost with his back near in two. The three sons expostulate with their father and mother, and Noah says,

"We wille do as ye bid us, we wille be no more wroth,
Dere barnes!
Now to the helme wille I hent,
And to my ship tent."

So they go in. The waves are supposed to rise. Forty days are passed in the course of a few lines; then three hundred and fifty days. The raven and dove are sent out, the floods subside, and Noah and his family come out on the green earth bare of mankind.

The sacrifice of Abraham is the next subject represented, with the same desire to realize the story, but with more dignity and some natural pathos.

For example—

Isaac. When I am dede, and closed in clay,
Who shalle then be youre son?
Abraham. A, Lord, that I shuld abide this day.
Isaac. Sir, who shalle do that I was won?
Abraham. Speke no sicke wordes, son, I the pray.
Isaac. Shalle ye me slo?
Abraham. I trow I mon;
Lyg stille, I smyte.
Isaac. Sir, let me say.
Abraham. Now, my dere child, thou may not shon.
Isaac. The shynyng of youre bright blayde
It gars me quake for ferd to dee.
Abraham. Therfor groflynges thou shalle be layde,
Then when I stryke thou shalle not se.
Isaac. What have I done, fader, what have I saide?
Abraham. Truly, no kyns ille to me.
Isaac. And thus gyltles shalle be arayde.
Abraham. Now, good son, let sicke wordes be.
Isaac. I luf you ay.
Abraham. So do I thee.
Isaac. Fader!
Abraham. What, son?
Isaac. Let now be seyn
For my moder luf.
Abraham. Let be, let be!
It wille not help that thou wold meyn;
Bot ly styлле tille I com to the
I mys a lytlylle thyng I weyn.

He turns aside to weep and think what he shall say to the boy's mother, while the obedient child makes no attempt to escape—

“He lyys fulle stille there as he lay,
For to I com dar he not styr.”

The close of this pageant is wanting from the single MS. which contains these Mysteries, and so is the opening of the next play, Isaac, and the supplanting by Jacob of Esau's birthright. The story of Jacob's ladder, his return out of Haran, his wrestling with the angel, and the kiss at meeting with Esau is the next subject. From the trial of the Faith of Abraham, through these plays we pass to that in which Moses, who repeats the Ten Commandments, David, the Sybil, and Daniel, speak to show how the line of the prophets leads to Christ. Then the play of 'Pharaoh' represents the plagues of Egypt and the crossing of the Red Sea by the Israelites. In all these, though the wrath of Pharaoh has much homeliness of expression, there is no grotesque admixture of the comedy of common life.

These are the Old Testament pageants in the Wakefield or Woodkirk series. The New Testament series begins with Cæsar Augustus on his throne. He is told of a child to be born that shall put down his power. He sends, committed to the keeping of Mahowne, a messenger to fetch Sir Syren—Luke's Cyrenius—and the messenger is shown first summoning, then bringing, him to court. Sir Syren counsels that the child be put to death when found, and that the messenger be sent from town to town to command every man to bring Cæsar a penny as tribute and do homage to him. The messenger goes, Cæsar swearing by Mahound to make a knight of him when he has well fulfilled his errand. The next plays are the 'Annunciation'—in which the story is told partly by dialogue between Joseph and Mary, partly by a long narrative monologue of Joseph's—and the 'Salutation' of Elizabeth, simply treated.

Then follows the usual comic entertainment of the 'Shepherds,' in two plays, of which either might be acted. The first play opens with a shepherd bewailing the hardships of life. He has lost all his cattle and is on his way to the fair to buy more. A second shepherd, in a like speech, prays that God will keep them from boasters and braggarts, "that with thare long daggers dos mekylle wo." Then the two begin clownish talk by hailing and recognizing one another—

"How, Gyb, good morne; wheder goys thou?

Thou goys over the corne, Gyb, I say, how!

First Shepherd. Who is that? John Horne! I make God a vowe;

I say not in skorne, Thom, how farys thou?

Second Shepherd. Hay, ha!

Are ye in this tounne?

First Shepherd. Yey, by my crowne.

Second Shepherd. I thoght by your gowne

This was youre aray."

Presently they are in dispute about the pasture-ground, when a third shepherd comes, who finds that while they have been quarrelling about the pasture they have lost sight of the sheep they were to feed. After homely jests they all three produce good suppers from their wallets and sit to eat. Then after such mirth as their supper could yield, when they are going home the angel sings and the star appears. After this, instead of returning quickly into jest, as the shepherds do in the Chester Mystery, they begin to prophesy of Christ, one of them even quoting Virgil's lines—

"Jam redit et virgo, redeunt Saturnia regna:

Jam nova progenies cœlo demittitur alto" (Ecl. iv. 6, 7)—

received in those days as a prophecy of Christ. But presently they do pass for a short time into jest for the sake of introducing the shepherds' burlesque upon the singing of the angels, before they go to present their gifts, a box, a ball, and a bottle. These presented, they depart with a few serious words.

The other Shepherds' Play, which might be used in place of this, is the most interesting of all Miracle Plays that have come down to us. Omit the angels' song and the Adoration, and there remains a farce with a plot. It is a rough picture of real life, no doubt, but real life mirrored

in a dramatic story, a true little drama and the earliest that is to be found in our language. Its sentiments show it to be the work of a man whose sympathies were strongly with the people. It begins, like the other *Shepherds' Play* in the collection, with the speeches or songs of two shepherds. The first shepherd wakes cold from sleep—

“I am nere hande dold, so long have I nappyd;
My legys they fold, my fyngers ar chappyd.”

He is not happy—

“We ar so hamyd,
For-taxed and ramyd,
We are mayde hand tamyd
 Withe thyse gentlery men.
Thus thay refe us oure rest, Oure Lady theym wary,
These men that ar lord fest they cause the ploghe tary.

* * * * *

Ther shalle com a swane as prowde as a po,
He must borow my wane, my ploghe also,
Then I am fulle fane to graunt or he go.
Thus lyf we in payne, anger, and wo,
 By nyght and day.”

The second shepherd complains too of the frost, so hideous that it makes his eyes water, and his complaint is of discomfort not in the world but in the home; for he has a wife

“As sharp as thystylle, as rugh as a brere,
She is browyd lyke a brystylle, with a sowre loten chere;
Had she oones wett hyr whystyll she couth syng fulle clere
 Hyr pater noster.

She is as greatt as a whalle,
She has a galon of galle.”

The two shepherds then begin to talk together, one asking the other “Saghe thou awro of Daw?” Daw comes, as a third shepherd, and his complaint is of the great floods

“Was never syn Noe floode sich floodes seyn,
Wyndes and ranys so rude, and stormes so keyn,
Som stamerd, som stod in dowte, as I weyn,
Now God turne alle to good, I say as I mene,
 For ponder.
These floodes so thay drowne,
Both in feyldes and in towne,
And berys alle downe,
 And that is a wonder.”

He asks the other two for drink and dinner, they reply with rough jest,

“Thoughe the shrew cam late
Yit is he in state
 To dyne, if he had it.”

He retorts with satire on the grudged bread of such servants as he, who are often wet and weary while their masters sleep, and get their dinners and drinks "fulle lately." The two shepherds ask where their sheep are, and Daw answers that they have been all day at good pasture in the corn. This being satisfactory, they are about to take tenor, treble, and bass in a song, when Mak enters with a cloak over his dress, wishing himself in heaven. He is recognized. One of them takes his cloak and he jestingly calls himself a yeoman of the king sent from a great lord. He must have reverence he says, "Why who be I?"

They comment on his making it so quaint. He proceeds with his jest. He shall make complaint of them.

They threaten the jester, and one asks him what will men suppose? He walks late and is in ill credit for sheep-stealing.

He is true as steel, he says, but has a sickness in his belly. He is sore and ill if he don't walk.

One asks after his wife.

She lies by the fire, he says, with a house full of brood; a new child every year, and some years two.

Presently the shepherds go to sleep, but cause Mak to lie down between two of them. When they are fast asleep Mak rises, steals a fat sheep, and is immediately knocking at his own door. His wife, Gyll, letting him in, finds that he who knocks is her sweeting, though, she says, "By the nakyd nek art thou lyke for to hyng."

Mak. Do way :

I am worthy my mete

For in a strate I can gett

More then thay that swynke and swette

Alle the long day,

and then, showing the sheep he has just stolen,

Thus it felle to my lott, Gylle, I had sich grace.

Uxor. It were a fowlle blott to be hanged for the case.

Mak. I have skapyd, Jelott, oft as hard a glase.

Uxor. Bot so long goys the pott to the water, men says,

At last

Comys it home broken.

Mak. Welle knowe I the token

Bot let it never be spoken ;

Bot com and help fast.

I would he were flayn ; I lyst welle ete :

'This twelmothe was I not so fayn of oone shepe mete.

Uxor. Com thay or he be slayn, and here the shepe blete ?

Mak. Then myght I be tane : that were a cold swette.

Go spar

The gayt doore.

Uxor. Yis, Mak,

For and thay com at thy bak.

The wife has an idea. Till the shepherds are gone she will hide the sheep in a cradle, lie in bed and feign that it is her new-born babe.

While the shepherds are yet sleeping, Mak has crept into his place between them. They presently awake, each in a different mood, the writer expressing with dramatic instinct, his sense of the difference of temperament shown in the awaking out of sleep. They had had dreams too. One dreamt he had seen Mak in a wolf-skin. Another had dreamt of his stealing a fat sheep noiselessly. But there he was, and seemed to be in such deep slumber that it was not easy to rouse him. He has been dreaming, he says, that his wife Gyll gave him increase to his own flock,

“Wo is hym has many barnes

And therto lytylle brede.

I must go home, by your lefe, to Gylle as I thoght.

I pray you look my slefe, that I steyllle noght :

I am loth you to grefe, or from you take oght.”

Mak goes to his wife's door after the shepherds have agreed to count their sheep again and meet at the crooked thorn. Mak tells his wife that the shepherds were about to count their sheep; and when they missed one they would make a foul noise and cry out upon him, wherefore she must do as she said. They prepare accordingly in Mak's house, while outside the shepherds meet and cry out over their loss of a fat wether.

Tercius Pastor. A, Colle, goode morne; why slepys thou nott?

Primus Pastor. Alas, that ever I was borne! we have a fowlle blott.

A fat weder have we lorne.

Tercius Pastor. Mary, Godes forbott.

Secundus Pastor. Who shuld do us that skorne? That were a fowle spott.

Primus Pastor. Some shrew

I have soght with my doges

Alle Horbery shroges

And of xv hoges

Fond I but oone ewe.

Mak's house ought to be searched. Presently they are all clamouring at the door of it. Then the jest is carried out. The wife groaning in bed cries to the shepherds,

“I pray to God so mylde

If ever I you begyld,

That I ete this chylde

That lyges in this credylle.”

Believing their sheep to have been killed, the shepherds look in vain for signs of meat in the house. Presently they are going, and Mak is triumphantly bidding them farewell at the door when, says one of them to another,

Primus Pastor. Gaf ye the chyld any thyng?

Secundus Pastor. I trow not oone farthyng

Tercius Pastor. Fast agayne wille I flyng,

Abyde ye me there.

Mak, take it no grefe, if I come to thi barne.

Mak. Nay, thou does me greatt reprefe, and fowlle has thou farne.

Tercius Pastor. The child wille it not grefe, that lytylle day starne.
Mak, with your lefe, let me gyf youre barne
Bot vj pence.

Mak. Nay, do way : he slepys.

Tercius Pastor. Me thynk he pepys.

Mak. When he wakyns he wepys.
I pray you go hence.

Tercius Pastor. Gyf me lefe him to kys, and lyft up the clowtt.
What the dewille is this? He has a long snowte.

The other shepherds look also, and see the trick; but Mak and Gyll brazen it out. A shepherd says

“Wylle ye se how thay swedylle
His foure feytt in the medylle?
Sagh I never in a credylle
A hornyd lad or now.”

Mak cries

“Pease byd I : What ! lett be youre fare!
I am he that hym gatt, and yond woman hym bare.”

When other protestations fail, Mak's wife hits on a new plea for her “pratty child,” her “dylly downe.”

“He was takyn with an elfe :
I saw it myself.
When the klok stroke twelf
Was he forshapyn.”

The story, of course, ends with the thrashing of Mak by the shepherds, who lay on till they are tired, and when they lie down to rest after their exertions the angel sings the *Gloria*. The peasants comment in the usual way, with burlesque, upon his singing, then speak of prophecy, go to Bethlehem, and adore the new-born child. One offers “a bob of cherries,” one a bird, and the other a tennis ball.

The next play, on the offering of the Magi, opens by the boastful Herod, who tells the people

“Who that makes noyse whyls I am here,
I say, shalle dy.”

The entry of the three kings is on horseback. The Flight of Joseph and Mary into Egypt is the next topic.

Then follows the Massacre of the Innocents, which is strongly dwelt upon, with active conflict between the soldiers and three mothers. This is made incidental to a large display of the Great Herod, cousin to Mahowne, who takes after all his boast and cruelty a mild departure from the scene with

“Begyn I to rekyn I thynk alle disdayn
For daunche.
Sirs, this is my counselle,
Bese not to cruelle
Bot adew to the devylle ;
I can no more Franche.”

That is to say, My business is brag and cruelty. Take, though it is out of character, this bit of advice from me. I can give you no more of courtly speech. Between the next two plays, the 'Purification of Mary,' and 'Christ with the Doctors in the Temple,' a leaf or more of the MS. is lost. Then after a play on 'John the Baptist' we come at once to the closing series. In the Conspiracy against and Taking of Christ, Pilate, Annas, and Caiaphas join counsel against him, Judas offers to betray, the Passover is prepared, and the rest of the Scripture story is told to the taking of Christ in the garden. The next play, opening with a dialogue between tormentors, shews Christ before Annas and Caiaphas. The tormenting of Christ is most painfully dwelt upon, being presented to the eyes of the spectators in this pageant and the next called the 'Flagellation,' which continues the Scripture story to the forming of the Procession to the Crucifixion. No mistake can be greater than to suppose that the rude cruelty of the tormentors in such scenes was meant to have comic effect. In the next play the Crucifixion itself is presented with the merciless Tormentors still for leading characters, the act of crucifying being elaborated with sickening detail, that seems to lay open the horrors of a mediæval torture-chamber. Christ is racked on the cross before it is uplifted and set in its mortice to stand like a mast. The Scripture story is continued in this pageant to the bearing of Christ's body to the tomb. The next play, of the 'Dice,' opens with Pontius Pilate magnifying himself and proving himself a Roman with bits of Latin oddly stirred into his speech. The Tormentors dispute before him over the Lord's robe. Dice are thrown for it, and from the one who wins Pilate asks for it in a way that cannot be refused. Thus all lose, and end with preachment against dicing. The next play is of the 'Harrowing of Hell,' upon which follow the 'Resurrection,' and the 'Walk to Emmaus.' The next, inscribed 'Thomas of India,' tells of our Lord's other appearances, and of the incredulity of Thomas. Last come, with a small portion of the MS. wanting between them, the 'Ascension' and the 'Day of Judgment,' except that a play of 'Lazarus' is added, and in a more modern hand a speech of Judas when he hangs himself.

The metres of the Wakefield Mysteries are more various and irregular than those of the Chester or Coventry series, and more freely broken up into dialogue by the dramatic spirit of the writers. It is evident also that these plays are not, as those of the other sets appear to be, the production of one wit. They vary among each other in style, language, and dramatic power. Even the Chester and Coventry plays, as showing the mind of the main body of the English people in the completeness with which they gave the Bible story to be communicated by laymen to laymen, have, I believe, no parallel in any foreign literature; and these north-country Mysteries in which the heart of the commonalty was set beating in close contact to the heart

of its religion, must stand at the head of a form of literature upon which I have good reason to dwell, since for about three centuries it was, in form of literature, one of the liveliest expressions of a main part of the mind of the English people.

Of the 'Coventry Mysteries' there is one MS.,¹ of which the greater part is shown by a date on its hundredth leaf to have been written in the year 1468. It wants the last leaf or leaves, and nothing in the MS. itself indicates that it belonged, as is assumed, to the Grey Friars of Coventry. Dr. Richard James, who died in 1639, librarian to Sir Robert Cotton, bought it for Cotton's library, and wrote on a flyleaf that the book was commonly called 'Ludus Coventriæ, sive Ludus Corporis Christi.' There is some reason for doubting Dr. James's record. That these were not the plays acted by the Coventry guilds is shown by the guild records, of which Mr. Sharp has given full details, and it is, at least, doubtful whether the Grey Friars would have kept a distinct set for their own acting. But Coventry was very famous for its Miracle Plays, and it is recorded that in 1456 Queen Margaret there saw "alle the pagentes played save Domesday," which might not be pleyde for lak of day. . . . And she was lodged at Richard Wodes the groc^r. . . . and there al the plays were first pleid."² Richard III. went to see the Corpus Christi plays at Coventry in 1484. Henry VII. saw them on St. Peter's Day in 1486, and went again with his Queen to see the plays of the Grey Friars, in 1492. The plays known as

The Coventry Mysteries

are forty-two in number. A Prologue sets them forth by way of proclamation to the inhabitants of any town in which that series of Mysteries might be chosen for representation, ending with the announcement

"A Sunday next, yf that we may,
At vj of the belle we gynne our play,
In N. towne, wherefore we pray
That God may be youre spede. *Amen.*"

The first play is of the 'Creation.' In the beginning was God, here as in the other sequences of Mysteries. After God has declared himself, and the angels have hymned, in Latin, the words from the *Te Deum*,

¹ In the British Museum. Cotton. Vespas., D. viii.

² Leet Book, quoted by Sharp.

'To thee all angels cry aloud, the Heavens and all the Powers therein. To thee Cherubim and Seraphim continually do cry, Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Sabaoth,' Lucifer claims and takes God's seat and is cast down for his pride from Heaven to Hell. The world is then made, Adam and Eve are created, and their command is given them by the word of God, without attempt at dramatic dialogue. The 'Fall of Man' is then narrated by dialogue that, like most of the conversation in this and the Chester series of Mysteries, does not disturb the regular structure of the stanzas. In the next Mystery, Cain and Abel take counsel from their father Adam, and Cain consents to go and sacrifice, with no worse remark than "I had lever gon home welle for to dyne." In sacrificing he picks out the worst sheaf for God, but this is quietly represented, not by the vigorous showing of his avarice in deliberation, as in the 'Wakefield Mysteries,' and without the coarseness that, with rude dramatic force, puts into this part of the sketch of Cain in the Wakefield play the most repulsive line in all our early literature. Cain of the 'Coventry Mystery' rather argues than insults. He urges that as God neither eats nor drinks, what is He the better if Cain gives Him the best sheaf. The offering of the worst having been then rejected, Cain's wrath is expressed in a few lines, Abel is killed, and the rest of the Scripture story is told gravely in dialogue between God and Cain, who expresses only his affliction at his doom.

The next story, that of 'Noah's Flood,' is also presented wholly without comic admixture. Noah's wife is pious and affectionate. After his family has been shut up in the ark, lapse of time is suggested by an interlude in which Lamech, the good archer, being blind, boasts to a youth of his old prowess, has his hand directed to what the youth takes for a beast under a bush, and kills Cain. Having thus incurred the curse upon the slayer of Cain, he beats to death with his bow the youth who had unwittingly misguided him.

The next subjects are 'Abraham's Sacrifice,' 'Moses and the Two Tables,' in which Moses delivers in metrical paraphrase the Ten Commandments; and the Prophets, in which after Isaiah, David, and Jeremiah, more than two dozen other speakers give their testimony from Scripture to the coming of Christ. This is the last of the seven Mysteries from the Old Testament. The next Mystery, the 'Barrenness of Anna,' has a prologue spoken in the character of Contemplation. Then follow 'Mary in the Temple,' wholly devotional, with an epilogue by Contemplation. It includes the fifteen degrees from Babylon to the heavenly Jerusalem, and an anagram upon the sacred name of Maria. 'Mary's Betrothment' is the next play. Here Joseph and the other kin of David come at the Bishop's command with white rods into the temple, and the rod of Joseph flowers. Joseph being an old man who has been "mayden evyr and evyr more wele ben," there is for a few lines a faint touch of homely humour in his unwillingness to have a young wife forced upon him. But the writer's devotion to the Virgin forbids much of that. The marriage is celebrated and pronounced by the Bishop the holiest that ever was in this world, because it is resolved on both sides that Mary shall be true wife but clean maid. In the next Mystery, that of the 'Salutation and Conception,' the scene is first in heaven, where

Contemplation having opened the subject, the Heavenly Father is addressed by the Virtues, Truth, Pity, Justice, Peace. Each person of the Trinity is among the speakers, before Mercy and Truth, Justice and Peace kiss each other, and the angel Gabriel is sent to open with *Ave Maria*, his speech with the Virgin Mother. Presently the three persons of the Trinity, as beams of light, enter her bosom. Gabriel afterwards ends as he began, with an *Ave*, and a choir of angels closes the Mystery, singing,

“Ave Maria, gratia plena,
Dominus tecum, Virgo serena.”

In the next Mystery of ‘the Return of Joseph,’ Joseph’s accusation of his wife is direct in form, but free from burlesque, before it passes into devotion after he has been spoken to by the angels. Then follows the visit to Elizabeth, in the course of which Mary repeats the *Magnificat* in Latin, and Elizabeth, as she does so, repeats it after her in English, sentence by sentence.

The next play, the ‘Trial of Joseph and Mary,’ is the first in the Coventry series that reflects a little of the life of its own time with native humour. A foremost character in it is our old acquaintance the Sompnour or Summoner to the Bishop’s court. He opens by warning all who stand round about,

“That I somoun yow alle the rowte
Loke ye fayl for no dowte
At the Court to pere.
Bothe John Jurrdon and Geffrey Gyle,
Malkyn Mylkedode and fayr Maybyle,
Stevyn Sturdy and Jak at the Style,
And Sawdyr Sadelere.”

Many more he cites by such names. Then the Court filling, Raise-slander and Back-biter accuse Joseph and Mary. The Bishop takes his seat between two Doctors of Law, and hearing the detractors, sends Sym Somnere to summon the accused. They are summoned and come, are baited by the detractors and doubted by the judges. Then they are submitted to the ordeal of drinking from “a bottle of God’s vengeance” before walking seven times round the altar. Joseph is tried first. If he be guilty, spots will appear on his face. Joseph drinks and totters feebly and slowly round the altar, urged by the Summoner to

“Lift up thi feet, sett forth thi ton,
Or be my trewthe thou getyst a clowte.”

Joseph clears himself. Then Mary, also reviled, drinks and goes triumphantly through the ordeal. One of the back-biters cries that the drink has been changed because Mary is of the Bishop’s kindred. He is required, therefore, to drink of it himself; does so willingly, and falls with a great pain in his head, of which sickness the Virgin heals him. The play ends with ‘Adoration of the Virgin’ led by the Bishop.

Next follows, still elaborating to the utmost, but without comic admixture, all that concerns the Virgin, the Birth of Christ. The next is the

'Shepherd' play, but it begins with the singing of the angels, after which the shepherds simply recite prophecies and then go to seek Christ, whom they adore with religious singing and without bringing of gifts. Then comes the 'Adoration of the Magi,' wholly serious, but with a fine blustering Herod—jolly Absalon showing his lightness and maistrie—who opens the scene riding on horseback to his "high halls" on the scaffold, and ranting a fine roll of r's,

"As a lord in ryalté in none regyon so ryche,
And rulere of alle remys, I ryde in ryal aray.
'There is no lord of lond in lordchep to me lyche,
Non lofflyere, non lofsemere—ever lestying is my lay,"

with more to the same effect. The Three Kings come, and presently, when Herod is mounted on his high scaffold, he begins with another roll of r's,

"Now I regne lyk a kynge areyd ful ryche,
Rollyd in ryngges and robys of array."

Of the child born in Bethlehem he speaks in this vein

"Boys now blaberyn bostynge of a baron bad
In Bedlem is born be bestys, such bost is blowe ;
I xal prune that paddok and prevyn hym as a pad,
Scheldys and sperys shalle I there sowe."

But after the 'Adoration of the Magi' we have a pageant of the 'Purification of the Virgin' before the 'Slaughter of the Innocents.' The slaughter of the Innocents opens with Herod. When he has been told by his seneschal that the Three Kings have stolen away, he again opens his bluster with a roll of r's,

"I ryde on my rowel ryche in my regne,
Rybbys fful reed with rape xal I send,
Popetyes et paphawkes I xal putten in peyne,
With my spere prevyn, pychyn and to pende."

Besides the bombast of alliteration, Herod uses in these Mysteries a metre of short lines which are of the ancestry of Shakespeare's mock burlesque—

"Thy mantle good,
What! stained with blood?
Approach ye Furies fell!"

Says Herod :

"Knyghtys wise,
Chosyn ful chyse,
Aryse! aryse!
And take your tolle!

And every page
Of ij yere age,
Or evyr ye swage,
Sleythe ilke a fool."

The massacre is represented with less rudeness than usual, as cause of lament to the mothers. Herod, informed that it is done, brags stoutly and calls for a rich feast. He sits gloriously at his feast. Death coming, tells the people that he shall cast down his pride. After the long speech of Death, Herod, who does not see the doom that is near, becomes loud in mirth and triumph. The two soldiers recite their success in massacre. Herod rejoices that the new born king, his enemy, is dead no doubt, and calls on the minstrels to "blowe up a mery fytt." While the triumphant music plays, Death slays Herod and the two soldiers. Then the Devil takes them. Death bids all men beware of Herod's pride, and beware also of himself, for

"Of my comyng no man is ware,
 Ffor whan men make most mery fare
 Than sodenly I cast hem in care
 And sle them evyn indede.
 Thow I be nakyd and pore of array
 And wurmys knawe me all abowte
 Yit loke ye drede me nytte and day,
 Ffor whan deth comyth ye stande in dowte;
 Even lyke to me, as I yow say,
 Shalle alle ye be here in this rowte."

And he leaves them with a little further emphasis upon the worms by which they will be eaten.

"Amonges wormys, as I yow telle,
 Undyr the erthe xal ye dwelle,
 And thei xal etyn bothe flesche and felle
 As thei have don me."

Christ Disputing in the Temple, the Baptism of Christ, the Woman taken in Adultery, and Lazarus, represent their story gravely and with close attention to the Scripture narrative. Four Consolers are used as speakers in the development of the story of Lazarus.

The next Mystery, the Council of the Jews, opens with a long speech from Satan to his people. "To gete a thousand sowlys in an houre me thynkyth it but shorn." He tells of Christ's sufferings to come and of His disciples who shall forsake Him, calls on the people for their love and promises them plenty. Let poverty take pride in a goodly pair of long peaked shoes of fine Cordovan leather, hose of the costliest crimson cloth, with two dozen points of kid leather, the tags of fine silver. Have a shirt of fine Holland, but care not for the payment, a stomacher of clear Reynes cloth, the best that may be bought, Cadiz wool or flock to stuff the doublet with "and make thee of proporcyon; two smale legges and a gret body." Have a gown of three yards, a purse without money, a dagger for devotion; hair hanging down to the collar in sidelocks to harbour living beasts that tickle man of nights. Let a high small bonnet cover the crown. Let great oaths and lechery make thee delight; to maintain thine estate use bribery, and if the law reprove thee, say thou wilt fight. Let the beggar's daughter counterfeit a gentlewoman, and if she lack money get it of some man, setting up as a sign a collar

splayed and furred with ermine, Calabrian cloth, or satin. The catalogue of fineries here given may have been adapted to the later date of the performance. It could not belong to a time earlier than the beginning of the 16th century. I have brought you, continues the Devil, new names for the pleasantness of sin. You shall call pride, honesty; lechery, nature; covetousness, wisdom; and wrath, manhood. After the Devil has thus preached his sermon he departs, and John the Baptist coming next, counsels the people to reform all wrong and be no more bold to do sin.

Then Annas appears, as a Bishop of the old law, between two doctors in furred caps with one standing before him as a Saracen, who is his messenger. He sends to Caiaphas and other judges, who are summoned, and assemble in a formal council at which they adjudge Jesus to death, but resolve to wait nine days, during which they will send out spies and make inquiry. Now follows the 'Entry into Jerusalem,' the 'Last Supper' (shewing also Judas's selling of his Lord, with the demon's comment upon Judas), and the 'Betrayal of Christ,' in which the Virgin Mary, told of the taking of her son, ends the Mystery with her lament and prayer.

The next Mystery, that of 'King Herod,' opens with the speaking of two doctors as teachers of the people, to whom they explain a sacred procession as it passes. When the Procession has entered into the place and Herod has taken his scaffold, an expositor in doctor's weeds, Contemplation, comes forward and explains, as the text stands in the extant MS., that with this (29th) Mystery it is proposed "toe procede the matere that we lefte the last yere." The rest of the speaking is by Herod, who has the laws of Mahownd in governance and is curious to see Christ, and by the soldiers who will search Galilee to take him. Then, in continuance of that same pageant, follows the 'Trial of Christ,' opened by a messenger who comes into the place "rennyng and crying 'Tydyngys! tydynges!' and so round abowth the place, 'Jhesus of Nazareth is take! Jhesus of Nazareth is take!'" and forthwith, hailing the princes, he tells how the Lord was taken. Then follows the bringing before Annas and Caiaphas, the buffeting and mocking (but the mocking slightly indicated), the denial by Peter and the crowings of the cock, the sending to Pilate who appears upon a scaffold of his own, Pilate's answering that he will come, the hanging of himself by Judas, Christ before Pilate, the sending of him to Herod, "and then Herowdes scafald xal uncloze, shewyng Herowdes in astat, alle the Jews knelyng, except Annas and Caiaphas," &c. After this Jesus is beaten "tyl he is alle bloody," and Herod bids them lead him back to Pilate, giving Pilate power to condemn or save. Here Satan enters the place "in the most orryble wyse," and while the procession is going from Herod's to Pilate's scaffold, a curtain is drawn showing Pilate's wife in bed. Pilate's wife's dream is now shown as a very serious interlude, opened by a speech from Satan, and concluded by the demon who frightens Pilate's wife out of her bed and causes her to run to her husband and warn him just before the time when the procession has come back to him with Jesus.

Now follows the Mystery of the 'Condemnation and the Crucifixion.' After this the remaining pieces show the 'Descent into Hell,' by the Soul

of Christ, the 'Burial of Christ,' the 'Resurrection,' in which the soul of Christ rises from Hell with Adam and Eve, Abraham, John the Baptist, and others. The soul reanimates its body, and immediately Christ proceeds to hail the Virgin, "*Salve sancta parens, my modyr dere,*" and there is, before the Scripture story proceeds, a dialogue between Christ and the Virgin, in which Christ says to her,

"Alle this werlde that was forlorn
Shal wurchepe you both evyn and morn."

The remaining plays are those of the 'Three Maries,' 'Christ appearing to Mary Magdalene,' the 'Pilgrims of Emmaus,' the 'Ascension,' the 'Descent of the Holy Ghost,' the 'Assumption of the Virgin,' a play seven times as long as that of the 'Ascension of Christ,' and 'Doomsday.' In the play of the 'Assumption of the Virgin,' Mary is crowned by the Trinity, Queen of Heaven and Mother of Mercy, and the archangel Michael declares that "God throw Mary is made mannys frend." The play of 'Doomsday' is left to us unfinished through the loss of the last leaf or two of the MS.

Mr. Thomas Sharp, who examined the ancient books and documents belonging to the Corporation of Coventry, while gathering materials for a history of his native city, found in the remaining account books of the trading Companies many particulars touching the management, machinery, dresses, and internal economy of the Coventry pageants or Mysteries. The name of pageant first applied to the vehicle on which the mysteries were acted, and was afterwards transferred to the performances themselves. The local MS. which records that Henry VII. went to Coventry in 1492 "to see the plays acted by the Grey Friars," is, says Mr. Sharp, not older than the reign of Charles I. Sir William Dugdale, in his 'History of Warwickshire,' printed in 1656, speaks of the Coventry plays as "being acted with mighty state and reverence by the friars of this house, who had theatres for the several scenes, very large and high, placed upon wheels and drawn to all the eminent parts of the city," and he referred to the Cotton MS. for authority as to the nature of their plays. The series known as the Coventry Mysteries may possibly have belonged to the Coventry Grey Friars, and the Grey Friars may have acted in the streets one set of mysteries, the Guilds another, though the practical difficulties in the way of believing that they did so are considerable. Certain it is that the plays now called Coventry Mysteries are not those which were acted by the Guilds of Coventry.

Although the Drapers' Company is known, by chance mention of it in description of a tenement, to have had a pageant house in 1392, these guild plays, according to MS. annals, quoted by Mr. Sharp, were invented in the year 1416, the year of the establishment of Hox Tuesday, said to be a commemoration of the overthrow of the Danes, near Coventry, on St. Brice's day, A.D. 1002, when there was played the 'Overthrow of the Danes, or History of King Edward the Confessor.'¹

Among the Digby MSS. in the Bodleian Library are three Other Miracle Plays. Miracle Plays on the Conversion of St. Paul, opened and closed by Poeta. St. Paul enters on horseback, is converted and takes the dress of a disciple. Two devils discuss his conversion with dismay, and resolve to stir up the Jewish bishops lest the devil's law "be clean downe laid." The handwriting of this MS. is said to be at least as old as the reign of Henry VII. Another play in the same volume shows the castle of Mary Magdalene besieged by the Devil and the Seven Deadly Sins, includes the raising of Lazarus, and has among its characters Tiberius Cæsar and Herod. A later play on the Slaughter of the Innocents, and another piece, an imperfect copy of a Moral Play of 'Mind, Will, and Understanding,' are in the same volume.²

In 1836 Mr. Collier privately printed twenty-five copies of each of five Miracle Plays; one, on the Harrowing of Hell, was from a MS.,³ as old as the reign of Edward III.; the next is the Sacrifice of Abraham from a MS. of the reign of Henry VI., discovered by Mr. D. Laing of Edinburgh, in Trinity College, Dublin;⁴ the third is the second Shepherd Play from the Towneley Series then unprinted; the fourth is the Chester Play of Antichrist, then also unprinted; the fifth is the Marriage of the Virgin. Mr. Collier has also edited for the 'Miscellany' of the Camden Society, a Miracle Play on the Incredulity of

¹ An order of Common Council, in 1591, refers the play on 'Hox Tuesday' to the death of Hardicanute. There were no spoken words when this play was acted in 1574 before Queen Elizabeth. It was then an antique military spectacle.

² Collier's 'History of Dramatic Poetry,' ed. 1831. Vol. ii., pp. 230-35.

³ From MS., Harleian, 2253.

⁴ Class D., Tab. 4, No. 18.

Thomas which may, he thinks, rival in antiquity the 'Harrowing of Hell,' written in Edward III.'s time, though the MS. in which it occurs may not be earlier than of the reign of Henry VI.¹

When about to set up a play, each guild chose for itself a competent manager to whom it gave the rule of the pageant and voted a fixed sum for its expenses. The Stage Management. playbook and the standing wardrobe and other properties were handed over to him, and he was accountable, of course, for their return after the close of the performances. The manager had to appoint his actors, to give them their several parts written out for them, perhaps by the prompter, who was a regular official, and to see to the rehearsals, of which there would be two for an old play and at least five for a new one.

At rehearsal time, as well as during the great performance, the actors ate and drank at cost of the guild, ending Actors. all with a supper, at which they had roast beef and roast goose, with wine for the chiefs, and beer for the rest. The actors were paid, of course, according to the length of their parts and quantity of business in them, not their dignity. Thus in a play setting forth the Trial and Crucifixion of our Lord, the actors of Herod and Caiaphas received each 3s. 4d., the representative of Annas, 2s. 2d., and of Christ, 2s., which was also the sum paid to each actor in the parts of his executioners, and 6d. more than was paid for acting the Devil or Judas. In the united plays of the Descent into Hell and the Ascension, the payment was to the actor who represented Christ, 1s. 6d., and 1s. 4d. to him who played the devil. In one play we find this gradation of the scale of payment to performers:—"Paid, for playing of Peter xvi^d, to two damsels, xii^d, to the demon, vi^d; to Fawston for hanging Judas, iv^d; paid to Fawston for cock-crowing, iv^d."

Of the costume of the actors and of the stage furniture, a

¹ It is in vol. iv. of the 'Camden Miscellany,' published by the Camden Soc. in 1859. The play was discovered many years ago among the archives at Guildhall, York, and published by Mr. J. Croft in 1797 in his 'Excerpta Antiqua,' with many errors in the reading of the MS. It was lent to the Camden Society by Dr. John Sykes of Doncaster.

tolerably clear notion is also to be drawn from the Coventry account books, of which Mr. Sharp printed all that ^{Properties.} bears upon such questions. They record, of course, chiefly repairs and renewals of stage properties and wardrobe. In one year, Pilate has a new green cloak, in another a new hat. Pilate's wife was Dame Procula, and we have such entries as, "For mending of Dame Procula's garments, vii^d." "To reward to Mrs. Grimsby for lending of her gear for Pilate's wife, xii^d." "For a quart of wine for hiring Proculus' gown, ii^d." No actor had naked hands. Those not in masks had their faces prepared by a painter. The costume of each part was traditional, varied little in the course of years, and much of it was originally designed after the pictures and painted sculpture in the churches. As in those mediæval decorations, gilding was used freely. The performer of Christ wore a gilt peruke and beard, so did Peter, and probably all the apostles or saints who would be represented on church walls with a gilt nimbus. Christ's coat was of white sheepskin, painted and gilded, with a girdle and red sandals. The parts of the Highpriests Caiaphas and Annas were often played in ecclesiastical robes hired from a church, a practice condemned by the author of the '*Manuel des Pêchiez*.' Herod, who wore a mask, was set up as a sceptred royal warrior in a gilt and silvered helmet, in armour and gown of blue satin, with such Saracen details of dress as the Crusaders connected with the worship of Mahomet, including the crooked faulchion, which was gilt. Pilate used in the Coventry guild play of the Ascension (which is not extant) a club with a broad head of leather stuffed with wool, and among articles furnished for him were also sixteen leather balls, of which the use is unknown.¹ The tormentors of Christ wore jackets of black buckram with nails and dice upon them. The Virgin Mary was crowned, as in her images. The angels wore white surplices

¹ Professor Ebert ('*Jahrbuch für Romanische und Englische Literatur*,' vol. i., p. 63) says it is "remarkable that no Englishman has made the observation," but cannot help thinking of the "schon tief im Mittelalter in England so beliebte cricket spiel," and suggests that Pilate, perhaps with help of his four knights, played a game of cricket as introduction or interlude. Cricket played with sixteen balls and a pantomime club stuffed with wool!

and wings. The devil also had wings, and was played in an appropriate mask and leather dress trimmed with feathers and hair. He was, as the Prologue to the Chester Plays describes him, "the devil in his feathers all ragged and rent," or, as the Coventry account-books show, carried three pounds of hair upon his hose. His close-fitting leather dress ended in representations of claws for the hands and feet. All the other actors wore gloves, or had sleeves continued into hands. The souls of the saved at the day of judgment wore white leather, the others, whose faces were blacked, a linen dress suggestive of fire, with black, yellow, and red, like the sinner's dress worn afterwards by heretics condemned at the *autos-da-fé*.

In the mounting of the scene, the floor of the stage was bestrewn with rushes, and the body of the scaffolding was concealed under a decorated cloth. At Coventry there was a canopy, with vanes and streamers, and a standard of red buckram. For some of the plays, besides the main stage, several scaffolds were required, as in the trial of Christ a scaffold for Pilate to whom a messenger is sent, and who comes to sit in judgment; and another scaffold for Pilate's wife, from before whose scaffold curtains are drawn when the devil goes to affright her with a dream, and she, rising from bed, comes to Pilate while the procession is marching round the open place where the pageant is acted. The space between such scaffolds was kept clear for the actors. When Herod entered on horseback, he came through the lane left for him in the street or square, and dismounted to ascend to his throne on the scaffold. Through the street, too, rode the Three Kings, who remained perhaps on horseback while speaking with Herod, and only dismounted to ascend the scaffold on which the infant Christ was represented. In the play of the Shepherds there must always have been two scaffolds, either side by side, with a partition between, or at a little distance from each other, in one of which the farce was acted, in the other the scene of the stable and the new-born Christ was devoutly realised. In the second Shepherds' Play of the Wakefield or Woodkirk Series, there must have been, besides the stage for the Christ child, a broad scaffold or two scaffolds side by side, representing on one side open country, separated by a wall with a door in it from the side representing

the interior of Mak's cottage, with bed, cradle, and other accessories. The stage furniture was as handsome in thrones and other properties as each Company could make it. They gilded what they could; for instance, the pillar to which Christ was bound. Hell mouth, a monstrous head of painted linen with open jaws,—sometimes jaws that opened and shut, two men working them,—terrible teeth, and a fire lighted where it would give the appearance of a breath of flames, was always carefully presented. By this way the fiends came up and down. In a MS. note to a mystery of *The Passion* in the Royal Library of Paris,¹ it is recorded that at the representing of such a play on the plain of Veximiel, when the chaplain of Metrange played Judas (and was nearly dead while hanging, for he fainted, wherefore he was very quickly unhung and carried off), the Mouth of Hell was very well done; for it opened and shut when the devils required to enter and come out, and had two large eyes of steel. Only in the play of the Descent into Hell, and not then always, does there seem to have been any desire in the English contrivers of these pageants to bring Hell itself upon the stage.

Miscellaneous items of charge in the Coventry accounts include some for the mending of Hell-mouth, for its curtain, or for keeping up the fire at it. There is a charge for souls' coats, one for a link to set the world on fire, and "paid to Crowe for making of three worlds, iii^s."

¹ Cited by Hone, 'Ancient Mysteries.' London, 1823, pp. 172, 3.

CHAPTER IX.

WHILE Miracle Plays and Mysteries were making the unlettered multitude familiar with the chief incidents of Bible history and some part of the teaching of the Church <sup>Church Con-
troversy.</sup> concerning them, difference of opinion was growing to a death struggle between those theologians who stood upon what they believed to be the ancient ways and those who sought the cure of what they held to be corruptions of Church discipline and doctrine, and as the best means of cure desired that the whole Bible, in their own tongue, should be given to the people. The split in the Papacy helped the Reformers. As Fuller says: "There was opened to Wiclif a great door of utterance made out of that crack or cleft which then happened in the seasonable schism at Rome."¹

After the murder of Archbishop Sudbury in the Wat Tyler rebellion of 1380, William Courtenay, Bishop of London, became, and remained for above ten years, Archbishop of Canterbury, and was zealous against the followers of Wiclif. Wiclif died on the last day of the year 1384, having provided the complete translation of the Bible into English.

John Purvey, of Lathebury, near Olney, in Buckinghamshire, ordained in 1377, had lived with Wiclif in his later ^{John Purvey.} years, assisting him in parish duties and in preparation of his English version of the Scriptures. After Wiclif's death Purvey removed to Bristol, and, for his zeal as a Reformer, was in 1387 forbidden by the Bishop of Worcester to preach in his diocese, of which at that time Bristol was a part. In 1388 and 1389 writs were issued for the seizure of Purvey's writings as well as those of Wiclif and of the Wicliffites. In 1390 he was in prison, where he wrote a commentary upon the Apocalypse from lectures of Wiclif's. In 1396 his heretical opinions were collected by Richard Lavingham. In 1400 Purvey was brought

¹ Fuller's 'Church History.' Ed. Brewer (1845). Vol. ii. p. 343.

before the Convocation immediately after William Sautré, formerly parish priest of St. Margaret, Lynne, but then of St. Osyth, London. Both recanted, but Sautré conquered his fear, reasserted his convictions, and was burnt next year in the city of London, the first Protestant martyr. Purvey, at about the same time, was admitted to the vicarage of West Hithe, in Kent, which he resigned in October, 1403. In 1407 he was distrusted by Archbishop Arundel; in 1421 he was imprisoned by Archbishop Chichele, and he was alive in 1427.

To John Purvey is ascribed, no doubt rightly, though a little doubtfully, a 'Remonstrance against Romish Corruptions in the Church,'¹ addressed to the People and Parliament of England in 1395. It attacks the holding of secular offices by the clergy, demands that they should live good lives, preach and teach, avoid simony, and be subject to the laws of the realm. Christian men are not bound to believe that the Pope is head of the holy Church on earth, or that his indulgences are "withouten errour or leesyng," or that St. Peter had more power than other Apostles greatly loved of Christ. The Pope's bulls cannot make it right to give to the rich alms that belong to the poor. Monks and canons ought to be poor and live simply, friars "to lyve sympliere and streitliere than other religioise."

Such as these were the doctrines that laid hold so firmly upon a considerable section of the English people, and made the Church reformers, who had never been without a spokesman since the days when Walter Map invented his Bishop Golias in the Court of Henry II., after Wiclif's death so numerous that Henry Knighton said "they were multiplied like suckers from the root of a tree, and everywhere filled the compass of the kingdom, insomuch that a man could not meet two people on the road, but one of them was a disciple of Wiclif."²

Soon after Wiclif's death in 1384, Richard the Second had
Contest with the Lollards. issued special letters authorising proceedings against the Lollards in Herefordshire, Northamptonshire,

¹ 'Remonstrance against Romish Corruptions in the Church, addressed to the People and Parliament of England in 1395, 18 Ric. II. Now for the first time published. Edited by the Rev. J. Forshall, F.R.S., etc., formerly Fellow of Exeter College. London, 1851.'

² Knighton in Twysden's 'Scriptores X.' (ed. 1652), col. 2666, l. 62.

Leicestershire, and elsewhere. In 1388 license was given to the Primate to search after Wiclif's books, and to imprison and otherwise punish those who had them. In 1395, which seems to have been the date of Purvey's Remonstrance against Roman Corruptions, the Reformers appealed to Parliament with a paper embodying their demands, and placards were affixed to the doors of St. Paul's and Westminster Abbey censuring the corrupt sensuality of a rich clergy that held a great part of the landed property in England, besides their personal estates, their tithes, and other pickings.

From Henry the Fourth the Church reformers, like all other reformers, looked for support; but he had not long worn his crown before he leagued with the clergy against them. As it had been settled by statute of the fifth year of Richard II., so it was confirmed by statute of the second year of Henry IV., that part of the sheriff's oath, when he took office, was to be that he should seek to redress all errors and heresies, commonly called Lollards. This indicates the early sense of the word, which, though otherwise derived from the Englishman, Walter Lollardus, who is said to have taught in Germany "the errors of the Petrobusians and Henricians,"¹ and who was burnt at Cologne in 1322, was then commonly supposed to be derived from *Lolia* or *Lollia*, tares. That clause for the separation of the tares of heresy remained part of the sheriff's oath until Sir Edward Coke objected to it on being appointed sheriff of Buckingham. In the second year of the reign of Henry IV. it was further enacted that if any persons were suspected of heresy the ordinary might detain them in prison till they were canonically purged, or did abjure their errors; provided always that the proceedings against them were publicly and judicially ended within three

¹ Petrobusians, from Pierre de Bruys, native of the hills of Dauphiné, who was burnt at St. Gilles about 1126. He taught that baptism before puberty is useless, and that prayers of the living do not help the dead; especially he attacked worship of crosses, said that they ought all to be burnt, and himself burnt them. The teaching of Pierre de Bruys was continued with more persuasion and less violence by the holy hermit Henri Bruys, whose followers were called the Henricians, and became numerous in the south of France. If Lollardus was a name given to Walter by his opponents, the etymology of the English word is really accordant to its usage in the above-cited statute of Henry IV.

months. If they were convicted, the diocesan, or his commissary, might imprison and fine them at discretion. Those who refused to abjure their errors, or after abjuration relapsed, were to be delivered over to the secular power, and the mayor, sheriffs, or bailiffs were to be present, if required, when the bishop or his commissary passed sentence, and after sentence they were to receive them, and in some high place burn them to death before the people.

It was under this Act that Archbishop Arundel, in 1407, held imprisoned in the castle of Saltwood the Wicliffite priest William Thorpe, with whom he held an argument upon the Canterbury pilgrimages that has been cited¹ in illustration of the groundwork of the 'Canterbury Tales.' Power of life and death over those whom they condemned as heretics was given by this statute to the bishops and their commissaries, and the condemned had no right of appeal to any temporal court. The zeal even of reformers who were of the upper classes was against the Lollards, who were teaching the untaught to claim religious liberty. Abbey-bred chroniclers were hot against them, but it is noticeable that both chroniclers and controversial theologians, either by absence of all charge of evil life, or by direct mention of their good conversation before men as a part of their diabolical cunning for the more ready enticement of men's souls, bore witness to the blameless character of Wiclif and the Wicliffites. Of this we shall presently find evidence.

Meanwhile the laws that had been powerless to stay the onward spiritual movement of an earnest people were strengthened, in the imagination of lawmakers, with new penalties. Towards the close of Henry IV.'s reign there were dissensions between King and Parliament, and the Parliament itself was so far inclined to second some of the complaints of Lollards that it recommended seizure of Church temporalities, and would have brought convicted priests within reach of the secular arm, out of the shelter of their bishops. But in the second year of the reign of Henry V., in 1414, a new law passed against the Lollards, which ordained that they should forfeit all the lands they had in fee simple and all their goods and chattels to the

¹ See pp. 290-2.

King. All state officers, at their entrance into office, were sworn to use their best endeavours to discover them, and to assist the ordinaries in prosecuting and convicting them. The same Act decreed that whatsoever they were that should read the Scriptures in the mother-tongue they should "forfeit land, catel, lif, and godes from theyr heyres for ever, and so be condempned for heretykes to God, enemies to the crowne, and most errant traitors to the lande."

It was at the beginning of Henry V.'s reign that Sir John Oldcastle, Lord Cobham, a brave and honourable knight, who was peer of the realm by right of marriage, was called upon by Archbishop Arundel to abjure tenets of Wiclif. His home, Cowling Castle, in Kent, had opened its doors to persecuted teachers of the Lollards, his social rank and his pure life made him a strong support of their cause in the eyes of the people who sought church reform. Cobham manfully set forth his true belief when in the hands of his accusers, saying, after all endeavour to procure a retractation, "None otherwise will I believe than I have told you hereafore. Do with me what you will." Delivered over to the secular arm, and conveyed back to the Tower (this was in September, 1413), during a six weeks' respite, Cobham escaped from his prison. Enormous reward was offered for his recapture, but he remained safe in Wales till he was taken by Lord Powis, early in the winter of 1417. On the next Christmas morning he was hanged up by the middle in an iron chain upon a gallows in St. Giles's fields, and burnt alive while thus suspended. The last words heard from him were praise of God, into whose hands he resigned his soul.

Chichele was then Primate, violent as Arundel in vindictive dread of Lollard attacks on the Church temporalities. It was he who led the orthodox clergy when they urged the ready king, Henry V., who was twenty-five years old, and had a military genius, to divert attention of the people from domestic needs by foreign war. It was a war based on unjust claims of dominion over France; claims which the English Primate and his party declared to be just and lawful. But it would be a most grave error to suppose that the opposition to the followers of Wiclif made by the Church as then established, while it necessarily included in its ranks all who were merely contending

for their worldly gains, was not maintained also by devout and learned men from a pure sense of right, a reverent faith in authority, and honest dread of what might follow from a general rejection of theological doctrines and Church customs believed to be necessary to eternal salvation, and as such transmitted to the keeping of the Church from the Apostles themselves, through the teaching of the fathers.

John of Bromyard, a small market town in a Herefordshire orchard district, near the river Frome, was a Dominican and Cambridge Master of Theology and Doctor Utriusque Juris, who taught Theology at his University, and about the year 1390 bitterly opposed himself to the teaching of Wiclif. He was dead in 1419, leaving behind him a 'Summa Predicantium,' which was printed first in an edition without date, place, or printer's name, then in a large folio at Nürnberg in 1485, again in 1518, at Lyons in 1522, in quarto at Venice in 1586, and at Antwerp in 1614. He wrote also an 'Opus Trivium,' so called because it treated of the Divine, the Canon, and the Civil Law, printed first without date, place, or printer's name, and again at Paris in 1500; and some works that have not been printed, namely, 'Summa Juris,' a 'Summa Juris Moralis,' a 'Tabula Utriusque Juris,' 'Distinctiones Theologicæ,' being fifty-five sermons for Sundays and great feast days, a Tractate against the Wicliffites, and a Theological Dictionary, if that be not another name for his 'Summa Predicantium.'¹

The Nürnberg edition of the 'Summa' is without pagination, but contains about a thousand pages in large folio of double-columned black letter.² The words of the preacher, says John of Bromyard, are as sparks that inflame the heart. Each must live not for himself alone, but also for posterity. The ancients held that he lives not for himself who lives not for the use of others; and John of Bromyard quotes to this effect, Seneca, Cicero, and Plato. He appeals to principles of civil law and ethics, quotes also Paul's Epistle to the Romans and Ecclesiastes

¹ Quétif and Echard's 'Scriptores Ordinis Prædicantium.' (Paris, 1719.) Tom. i. pp. 700-1.

² 'Summa Predicantium Fratris Johannis de Bromyard, Ordinis fratrum Predicatorum,' is the title heading the index. The Nürnberg edition in the British Museum is without a title-page.

to show why he has in this book arranged alphabetically, with sub-division for convenient reference, his compilation of matters fit to be used in preaching; as, of healing herbs, of edifying Pagan fables and testimonies to the truth drawn from the heathen and their works, of customs of men and of strange animals, or of examples that can be applied against particular vices, because men are less stirred by generalities. Thoughts are as much more than words as soul is more than body. The faults of his compilation, says John of Bromyard, are his own. Its merits are to be ascribed to the clemency of the Blessed Virgin, St. Gregory, and St. Dominic. The book thus introduced is arranged under such heads as 'Abjicere,' (we must cast away our sins), Abstinence, Absolution, Adulation, Avarice, Contrition, Conscience, Counsel, the Cross, Damnation, Detraction, Election, Faith, Judgment, Patience, Poverty, Penitence, Spiritus Sanctus, Trinity, Visitation, Vocation, and the like, ending in Xhristus, all forming an earnest, erudite, and interesting mass of mediæval practical theology.

Henry V., although essentially a soldier, and intemperate in war, was temperate in life, well taught, and had respect for scholars. His Ambassador in Spain in 1422 was ^{William Lindwood.} William Lindwood, an Oxford Divinity Professor, who wrote the 'Constitutions of the Archbishops of Canterbury from Langton to Chichele.' Lindwood was made Bishop of St. David's in 1434, and died in 1446. He had been preceded in his bishopric by the astronomer Rocleve, who had been among the friends of Henry V., and to whom that king gave the see.

But most closely attached to King Henry V. was the most famous English theologian of his day, Thomas of Walden, who was the king's confessor. Thomas Netter, of Saffron ^{Thomas Netter, of Walden.} Walden, in Essex, or Thomas Waldensis, was born about the year 1380, and educated at Oxford, where he was made a doctor of divinity, and publicly disputed against Wiclif's doctrines. He became a Carmelite in London, and in 1395 was ordained sub-deacon by Braybrook, Bishop of London. In 1409 he was appointed a member of the Council of Pisa, and in 1414 he became Provincial of the Carmelite order in Eng-

land, succeeding in that office his friend and patron, Stephen Patryngton, who was then made Bishop of St. David's. In this character he was a distinguished member of the Council of Constance (1414-1418), which condemned John Huss and Jerome of Prague to be burnt. Walden—accounted among the orthodox the prince of controversialists in the fifteenth century—was also Inquisitor-general in England for the punishing of heretics. At the close of the Council of Constance, Thomas of Walden went in 1419 into Lithuania, to negotiate a peace between Jagello, King of Poland, and Michael, Grand Master of the Teutonic Order. He founded in Lithuania several Carmelite monasteries, and by some of his admirers has been called the apostle of Lithuania. It was when he returned to England that Thomas of Walden became confessor to King Henry V., who on his death-bed committed his infant son to his confessor's care. Afterwards Walden went abroad with the young Henry VI., and died while attending on the English Court at Rouen in November, 1430, bequeathing his books to the great library of the Grey Friars in London.

As a writer Thomas of Walden is remembered as the ablest of the controversialists against the Lollards. The chief of his numerous works are his 'Doctrinale Antiquitatum Ecclesiæ,' dedicated to Martin V., and the 'De Sacramentis,' which is a continuation of it.¹ He wrote commentaries upon several books of Scripture, on Prescience and Predestination, sermons, 164 letters, &c., on Grammar, Logic, the ten Predicaments, on Physics, Metaphysics, Ethics, and the Soul. He put together, also a Latin book called 'Bundles of Master John Wiclif's Tares with Wheat,' which contains the statute de Hæretico comburendo; the bull of John XXIII. against Wiclif's heresies; condemned opinions of Wiclif; sentence passed on him, and on John Huss; accusations against Jerome of Prague; divers condemned errors of Lollards and others; the latest topic being the examination of William Whyte, September 13, 1428,

¹ These have been several times published together as 'Thomæ Waldensis Opera,' printed, always in folio, at Paris in 1532, at Salamanca in 1556, at Venice in 1571, and again at Venice, edited by the Jesuit Blanchiotti in three volumes folio, in 1757.

at which Thomas of Walden was himself present, two years before his death. The 'Fasciculi Zizaniorum,'¹ were first edited by the late Canon Shirley from the unique MS. in the Bodleian Library, for the series of Chronicles and Memorials issued under the direction of the Master of the Rolls; and Dr. Shirley's opinion was that Patryngton put together the first part of the narrative in the course of the years 1392-1394, and perhaps collected some of the tracts which are arranged in chronological sequence; but that he abandoned his plan and left his papers to Walden. To these, which extended to the year 1400, Walden added some collected by himself, after his return from Pisa, during the years 1414-1428, and the materials thus accumulated were, after Walden's death, abridged and arranged by another hand.

Walden's 'Doctrinale' is a long and systematic theological assertion of Church doctrine against Wicliffite heresies. First citing ten doctrines of the Wicliffites,—as, that the Church authority is to be condemned whose rights cannot be proved from Scripture; that Scripture is the only rule of faith; that the Fathers have erred,—he says that "the Wicliffites affect piety, declaim against vices and teach Holy Scripture, that so they may the more artfully deceive the simple;" that "the Wicliffites contrive not only their words but also their conduct, that they may the more effectually seduce men by their credit for good life;" that they accuse the Catholics "of not understanding Wiclif's words, or reciting them falsely, or boldly ascribing to him what he did not say." Then, after prayer for the happy consummation of his work, the orthodox controversialist opens his first book on Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church, in his disparity of natures, and argues against Wicliffite opinions of the essence, power, and knowledge of God, of the composition of man, and of Christ as God and man. His second book proceeds then to "the body of Christ, which is the Church, and its various members." Here he argues first of the Epis-

¹ 'Fasciculi Zizaniorum Magistri Johannis Wyclif cum Tritico. Ascribed to Thomas Netter of Walden, Provincial of the Carmelite Order in England, and Confessor to King Henry V. Edited by the Rev. Walter Waddington Shirley, M.A.' London, 1858. From the valuable introduction to this book I take part of the information given in the text.

curacy of St. Peter and his predominance among the apostles, which soon brings him to assertion of the powers of the Pope and bishops. His third book is of those whose religion is perfected in the law of Christ, and here is defined the superiority of the religion of the religious orders to that of the common people. In his fourth book Thomas of Walden shows that men devoted to religion in the Church have a right to ask for their food, and beginning with the mendicant orders, he argues that Christ was a mendicant, and ordered that his disciples also should beg. Having replied to the Wicliffite argument against mendicant orders, Walden defends those living by manual labour and those which live on acquired land and property. Such is the purport of the four books constituting the first part of the 'Doctrinale.' It is followed by a work, also dedicated to Martin V. and prefaced by a recitation of twelve Wicliffite doctrines, that treats of Wicliffite and older heresies against the Seven Sacraments, dealing with each Sacrament in turn. Another survey of the argument upon the Sacraments is meant to confute the Sacramentarians. There was to have been a work also upon Indulgences, &c., but this was not written.

To silence the voice of an earnest people, Henry IV. urged on his willing son with his last breath the policy of drawing their attention from their home-wants towards foreign war. The desired end was answered, and the English mind which for seven centuries had spoken its best—produced its highest literature—in labour, for the love of God and right to banish all detected wrong, was checked in utterance during the French wars and the civil wars that followed. They were wars of plunder and conquest, maintained by rival chiefs for selfish ends, that stirred among the English combatants no sense of a great principle. A civil war wherein, on either side, the contest involves the defence of principles for which men strongly convinced may nobly die, exalts the mind, and its best utterances will make an undying literature. The absence of great English writers during the French wars and civil wars following the death of Henry IV. is due far less to the fact that those wars were exhausting than to their ignoble character. In a mean hatred of France, or in the unjust

Influence of
the French
wars upon
the English
mind.

invasion memorable for the victory of Agincourt, there was nothing to exalt the souls of the great thinkers. When the Cymry were resisting the incoming of the Angles, even the disastrous battle in which all their leagued chiefs except three are said to have perished, had its poet. Their fields were reddened with their blood; their desolated homes were left "without light, without songs;" their bards died miserably, mourning the loss of the sons they had sent to battle, of the chiefs by whose hearths they had sung; but still the fight for liberty produced the noble days of Cymric thought. Those days of their exhausting, unsuccessful strife, inspired their Aneurin, their Llywarch Hen, their Taliesin, Merddhin, and a dozen more whose names survive.¹ The Cymry had another outburst of true song,² and that was when the Welsh were battling for their nationality against the Anglo-Norman kings. The struggle of the Scots against the mastery of England produced a Barbour to sing of the fight of Bannockburn. The contest of the English nation against civil and religious despotism, the labour to produce a Church worthily representing and sustaining the best aspirations of the people, produced from the noblest men within the Church itself from generation to generation, from Cædmon's Paraphrase to Langland's 'Vision of Piers Plowman,' such a literature as expressed most worthily the English mind. It turned even among laymen the elegant recreations of the courtier into patriotic utterances, profoundly earnest as the 'Vox Clamantis' of John Gower, large and true in the expression of their sense of life as all that verse of Chaucer in which English literature first spoke with its full power through a writer who had not been educated to the service of the Church, and never held a benefice or lived among the clergy. Gower, indeed, was a layman, but he had for some time a benefice as Rector of Great Braxted, and he spent his last years in the priory of St. Mary Overies.

Through the fourteenth century the stream of English literature flowed, broadening and deepening as culture broadened and the nation passed into new depths of thought, but now the flow is over shoals of barren sand and wastes of marsh haunted by will-o'-the-wisps, with only here and there

Decline of
Literature in
the fifteenth
century.

¹ See book i. ch. 3.

² See book i. ch. 20.

a runlet of clear water. What harvest of high thought could clothe the desolation of those selfish wars? What serviceable light could shine from the delusive victories of that fifteenth century which bred for us not a single writer of the foremost rank?

Nearly the whole of English literature in the fifteenth century was imitative. It transmitted formulas of a preceding time. It was distinctly English, too; the character remained, although it was expressed less forcibly. There is advance, too, to be noted, apart from the fact that in the middle of this century stands an event of such great ultimate influence as the discovery of printing.

But still the monks are at work in their copying rooms, and the rich Abbeyes are not only multiplying copies of good books, but they are producing, as of old, a line of chroniclers. A good example of monastic adherence to the old-established way, in custom as in opinion, is to be found in the sequence of chronicles produced during the period that I now speak of in the Abbey of St. Alban's.

William Rishanger probably was a native of the village now called Rishangles, about four miles from Eye in Suffolk. Bale reports of him that he was a monk of St. Alban's, and in 1259 succeeded Matthew Paris in his office of chronographer, with a stipend from King Henry III., that court office being then usually delegated to a St. Alban's monk. In this office which, if it existed, there is no evidence that Rishanger ever held, he wrote, says Bale, several works, including the 'Opus Chronicorum' (a continuation of Matthew Paris), Gesta and Annals of Edward I. He was alive, Bale adds, in 1312, aged sixty-two: so that, by Bale's account, he must have been nine years old when he succeeded Matthew Paris as the King's Chronographer. Mr. Riley, who has been editing Rishanger's Chronicle and other St. Alban's histories,¹ shows that, if William Rishanger wrote the second part of it (1272-1306), he must have been living in 1327, or later; but he believes him to have compiled only the earlier part (1259-1272),

¹ 'Wilhelmi Rishanger . . et Quorundam Anonymorum Chronica et Annales regn. Hen. III. et Edw. I. Edited by Henry Thomas Riley, M.A., 1865, in 'Chronicles and Memorials' issued under direction of the Master of the Rolls.

which alludes to the marriage of Gilbert Earl of Gloucester in 1290. Of the other works attributed to Rishanger, Mr. Riley accepts as certainly his none but the short and feeble record of the 'Gesta Edwardi I.,' compiled soon after the King's death, and a chronicle of the Wars of the Barons ('De Bellis Leues et Eusham').

Another of the St. Alban's monks employed as chroniclers was John of Trokelowe, who produced Annals from 1307 to 1323.¹ Of himself there survives only the ^{John of Trokelowe.} name in a MS. known as the St. Alban's Book. It is written in the body of the MS., where Trokelowe's chronicle is made continuous with Rishanger's, to which it was a sequel. Trokelowe's annals are valuable as an authority for events in the reign of Edward II. In the same St. Alban's Book,² as Trokelowe continues the chronicle ascribed to Rishanger, ^{Henry of Blanford.} another monk, Henry of Blanford (Blanquefort, near Bordeaux, then under English rule), continued Trokelowe. Trokelowe's annals contain evidence that they were not compiled before the year 1330, therefore, if Blanford's chronicle of 1323-1324 was written as a continuation, it could not have been written before that year.

From the St. Alban's book containing these records, history was incorporated by the St. Alban's monks, continually ^{William Wyntershille.} busy in their Scriptorium, in Chronicles,³ one written by William Wyntershille, who died about the year 1424. These later records were the foundation of Walsingham's 'Historia Anglicana,'⁴ the work in which these successive chronicles produced by the monks of St. Alban's culminated.

The English History of Thomas Walsingham, monk of St. Alban's, extends from 1272 to 1422, and was first printed in 1574, with the help, if not under the immediate supervision of Matthew Parker, Archbishop of Canterbury.⁵

¹ They were edited inaccurately with the Chronicle of Henry of Blanford, by Thomas Hearne, in 1729 (Oxford), and re-edited by Mr. Riley, in 1866, with Blanford, and some pieces by unnamed annalists of St. Alban's, in a volume of the series of 'Chronicles and Memorials.'

² Cotton MSS. Claudius, D. vi.

³ MS. Reg. 13 E., and MS. No. vii., Coll. Corp. Christi, Cambridge.

⁴ MS. Arundel Coll. Arm., No. vii.

⁵ Another version of it formed in 1603 part of a work by William Camden,

Thomas Walsingham held in St. Alban's Abbey the offices of
Thomas Walsingham. Precentor and Scriptorarius, or chief copyist, and while he was the chief copyist a new Scriptorium or copying-room was built by Abbot Thomas de la Mare at his suggestion. In 1394 Walsingham was made Prior of the Cell of Wymundham, and so remained till the year 1400, when John Savage became Prior in his stead, and Walsingham probably returned to St. Alban's. Some years afterwards, perhaps about the year 1419, he compiled his 'Ypodigma Neustriæ,' or Demonstration of Events in Normandy, dedicated to Henry V., in compliment upon his recent conquests in Normandy, but the affairs of Normandy occupy only a small portion of the work. After this time nothing is known of him, Bale's statement that he flourished in 1440 being doubtless an error.

Passing from these St. Alban's annalists, who represent for their own time the best type of a form of literature now near its close, let us turn to a few detached examples of ecclesiastic chronicling before we leave the cloister for the battle-field.

Robert Avesbury kept the register of the archiepiscopal court
Robert Avesbury. at Canterbury. He began a history of the wonderful deeds of the great king of England, the lord Edward III.,¹ which carries from the birth of Edward III. in 1313 to 1356, a short detail of public events with simple transcripts of original documents and extracts from letters. As Edward III.

and it has now been edited by Mr. Riley for the series of 'Chronicles and Memorials of Great Britain and Ireland during the Middle Ages,' published under the direction of the Master of the Rolls. 'Chronica Monasterii S. Albani. Thomæ Walsingham, quondam Monachi S. Albani, Historia Anglicana edited by Henry Thomas Riley, M.A., of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, and of the Inner Temple, Barrister-at-Law.' Vol. i., 1863; vol. ii., 1864. Mr. Riley has deferred to the credit of Walsingham's name, and reprinted the 'Historia Anglicana,' instead of giving the full text of the unpublished chronicles, MS. Bibl. Reg. 13 E. ix. and the parts of the St. Alban's volume among the Corpus Christi MSS., from which he tells us that Walsingham's History was only an abridgment. He does, indeed, supply in an Appendix the details which Walsingham omits, but clearly these unpublished records were entitled to the place of honour hitherto taken by Walsingham, who has been in print for almost three centuries.

¹ 'Roberti de Avesbury Historia de Mirabilibus Gestis Edvardi III. Accedunt. 1. Libri Saxonici qui ad manus Joannis Joscelini venerunt. 2. Nomina eorum, qui scripserunt Historiam gentis Anglorum, et ubi extant per Joannem Joscelinum. E Cod. MSS. desc. ediditque Tho. Hearnius, Oxon. 1720.'

lived until 1377, the cessation of the chronicle in 1356 causes it to be inferred that Robert of Avesbury died then or in 1357.

William Thorn, a Benedictine monk of Canterbury, who was living about 1380, wrote a very full chronicle of events concerning his own Abbey, including a historical setting forth of its acquisitions and privileges. William
Thorn.

Thomas Stubbs, called also Stobæus, Archbishop of York in 1360, was a Dominican theologian, who wrote a chronicle of the archbishops of York.¹ He wrote Thomas
Stubbs. also, in Latin, a Shield against the opponents of Ecclesiastical Statutes; on the Stipends due to Preachers of the Word of God; on the Perfection of the Solitary Life, and on the Art of Dying; himself dying about the year 1373.

John of Trevisa, who was vicar of Berkeley, in Gloucestershire, towards the close of the fourteenth century, and chaplain to Thomas Lord Berkeley, made, for that John of Tre-
visa. nobleman, a translation of Higden's Polychronicon, which is very interesting as an early specimen of English prose. It is said to have been finished in 1387. Trevisa, who died about 1412, was also a translator of other works from Latin into English; even of the Bible, Caxton said; but of an English Bible by Trevisa there is not a trace. He made odd mistakes; and although Higden's Latin is not difficult, found reason for saying, "Though I can speke, rede, and understande Latyn, ther is moche Latyn in these books of Cronykes that I can not vnderstonde, nether thou, without studyeng, auisement, and lokyng of other bookes."²

Henry Knighton, born towards the close of the fourteenth century, was a regular canon of the abbey at Leicester, who wrote a Latin chronicle of events in Henry
Knighton. England from the time of King Edgar to the death of King Richard II.³ His chronicle is another of the ten published

¹ 'Chronica Pontificum Ecclesiæ Eboracis,' printed by Twysden in 'Hist. Ang. Scr. X.,' and in Henry Wharton's 'Anglia Sacra.'

² Caxton printed Trevisa's Higden with the English altered, or, as he said, "a lytel embelysshed fro tholde makyng," with a continuation to 1460. Trevisa's own text is now being edited side by side with Higden's Latin by Mr. Churchill Babington in the Rolls series of 'Chronicles and Memorials.'

³ 'Compilatio de eventibus Angliæ a tempore Regis Edgari usque ad mortem Regis Ricardi Secundi.'

in 1652, in a single volume, by Sir Roger Twysden. Knighton, of all the annalists of his time, was the one most energetic in hostility to Wiclif and his teaching. "This master John Wiclif," he says, "translated into the Anglie—not Angelic tongue, the Gospel that Christ gave to the clergy and the doctors of the Church, that they might minister it gently to laymen and weaker persons, according to the exigence of their time, their personal wants, and the hunger of their minds, whence it is made vulgar by him, and more open to the reading of laymen and women than it usually is to the knowledge of lettered and intelligent clergy; and thus the pearl of the Gospel is cast forth and trodden under feet of swine."¹

Meaux Abbey, in Holderness, three or four miles to the east of Beverley, had a chronicler in its nineteenth abbot, Thomas of Burton, who resigned in 1399, and occupied the remaining eight years of his life in composing his work, and bringing together the feodaries, annals, and other evidences of his monastery. This chronicle, extending from the foundation of the abbey in 1150 to the year 1396, remains to us in the handwriting of its author; there remains also the author's autograph of a continuation of the record to the year 1406 by another monk of the same abbey.² Thomas of Burton was a native, doubtless, of one of the Burtons, perhaps Burton Pidsea, near the monastery to which he gave his life. He served as bursar in 1393-4, and Mr. Bond, who is editing his chronicle, believes that as he was twenty-second in a list of twenty-eight, he was then probably under thirty years of age. As bursar, he had good opportunities of obtaining information, and he may then have begun his chronicle. He was made abbot in 1396, as a man both pious and lettered, on the resignation of William of Scarborough. But it was urged by many of the brethren that he had been forced upon them by the Duke of Gloucester, acting through the Abbot of Fountains, who declared that all

Thomas
Burton of
Meaux.

¹ 'Scriptores X.,' col. 2664.

² 'Chronica Monasterii de Melsa, a Fundatione usque ad annum 1396, Auctore Thoma de Burton, Abbate. Accedit continuatio ad annum 1406 a monacho quodam ipsius domus.' Edited from the autographs of the authors by Edward A. Bond, assistant keeper of the MSS., and Egerton Librarian in the British Museum. Vol. i. 1866.

who resisted the election of Thomas of Burton would be shut up in the Duke's prison at Hedon. This complaint having been made to a general Chapter of the Cistercian order, the Chapter sent commissioners to make inquiry; but Robert Burley, the abbot of Fountains, closed the gates of Meaux Abbey against them, and set men armed with bows and arrows, and other weapons, to oppose their entrance. Burley and Burton, cited to appear before the general Chapter, went to Rome, and procured a bull which not only revoked the authority of the Chapter, but also annulled all the commissions issued by it. A compromise was afterwards made upon arbitration. But the uncompromising abbot of Fountains, Father Abbot to Meaux, was no party to this. After a little while he paid a paternal visit to Meaux, and denounced the malcontents. Litigation was renewed; the monks accused of rebellion carried their case to Rome. Burton, who had been cutting down the timber of the abbey to pay the expenses of these quarrels, stayed further dispute by yielding up his office, in 1399, when he had held it for three years and five weeks without have enjoyed a month's peace with his convent. After his retirement, he employed himself as chronicler until he became blind, about eight years before his death in 1437. The historical part of his chronicle for the times preceding his own is partly from Higden, an account of the successions to the see of York is copied literally from Thomas Stubbs. Among others from whom he derives information, the St. Alban's chroniclers are not included. But history, like other forms of literature, was in his time ceasing to depend, as it has done, upon the fostering care of learned monks, who give their leisure to the pen.

Henry V., having made his claim on France of all that had ever been possessed on French soil by his ancestors, left England to the care of his brother John, Duke of Bedford, crossed the channel in August, 1415, and besieged Harfleur by land and water. During the five weeks' siege, before surrender of the town, the English lost two thousand men by sickness alone. Then, after the sick and wounded had been sent home, of an army of 6500 cavalry and 24,000 archers, gunners, and artizans, there remained only nine thousand fit to take the field. With these Henry advanced on Calais, was checked for six days at the ford of Blanchetaque, on the Somme,

then marched up the river-bank, checked by the constable D'Albret, with a superior force, till he succeeded in crossing by a ford near the head of the stream at St. Quentin. The French fell back, not intending to give battle until all their levies had come up. Henry marched straight upon Calais, through Artois, and being met at Blangi by the mass of the French army, fought there on the 25th of October, 1415, the battle named after the castle of Agincourt, which overlooked the narrow gorge in which the far out-numbered Englishmen were to be caught and smitten hip and thigh. The English victory closed with a barbarous massacre of prisoners. Of the French, seven princes, three hundred lords, and eight thousand gentlemen were slain; the commonalty were not counted. Of the English, the Duke of York, the Earl of Suffolk, four knights, and about sixteen hundred men were lost. Next morning Henry, astonished at his victory, proceeded to Calais, where he held a council that determined his return to England to seek means for the renewal of the war. While these means were being gathered, civil strife was renewed in France. The Count of Armagnac administering cruelly the French affairs, imprisoned the Queen, and was accused of poisoning the dauphin John. Queen Isabel joined with the Duke of Burgundy against her husband, her son Charles, and the Count of Armagnac; and the two French factions became the two camps of Armagnac and Burgundy. In August, 1417, Henry landed in France again, conquered Lower Normandy, and after five months' siege took Rouen. This led to a union of the Burgundians and Armagnacs against the common enemy. But scarcely two months after the reconciliation, the Duke of Burgundy was murdered, and his young son and successor, Philip, immediately joined the English.

Two chroniclers of English history fought in the battle of Agincourt. We have a half interest in John de Wavrin, knight,
John de Wavrin. who died lord of Forestel, in Picardy, and was born the illegitimate son of Robert lord of Wavrin, Lillers, and Malannoy, who had been chamberlain to John Duke of Burgundy. John de Wavrin was contemporary with another chronicler, also the bastard of a noble family, Enguerrand de Monstrelet. Wavrin began his career as a soldier by fighting on the side of the French at Agincourt, where his father and

brother fell. But two years later the Duke of Burgundy called the lords under his seignory to serve in the expedition to Paris, and thenceforth John de Wavrin was with the French allies of England. When young Philip of Burgundy, after the murder of his father, sought English alliance, Isabel promised the friendship of Charles, and both agreed that Henry V. should marry the princess Katherine, and assume the regency as heir to the French crown. The treaty was signed in May, 1419, in the cathedral of Troyes. Within a fortnight afterwards, Henry and Katherine were married. Sens, Montereau, and Melun were then besieged and taken, and on the 1st of December, 1419, Henry V. of England, Charles VI. of France, and Philip of Burgundy entered Paris in triumph. Wavrin took part in the succeeding contests. In 1428, in the reign of Henry VI., he served Sir John Fastolf, grand master of the Regent Bedford's household, "with 5000 men as well selected," he says, "as any I had ever seen in the country of France." In 1429, after the French, directed by Joan of Arc, had beaten the English at Patay, Sir John Fastolf, advised to save himself, entered the field again, saying he would sooner die than abandon his people. When his men were slain, he went with a very small company, "expressing the deepest sorrow that ever man felt." Monstrelet's version of this flight affixed unjustly a stain on Sir John Fastolf's character, which probably suggested Shakespeare's use of his name in place of the honoured name of Sir John Oldcastle, with which his fat knight had been first associated. John de Wavrin called himself advanced in life in the year 1455, and his chronicle ends abruptly with an event in the year 1471. He had left the army when yet in the vigour of manhood, retired to his native country of Artois, settled at Lisle, married, become seigneur of Forestel and Fontaine, and turned historiographer. During the nine years between 1445 and 1455, he was digesting the memorials of English history for his chronicle of it from the earliest years to the death of Henry IV. Some time afterwards, he added a continuation, which brought down the narrative to the year 1471. Wavrin, in compiling the earlier part of his history, drew freely on the Brut, appropriated much from Froissart, and used less freely the chronicles of Monstrelet, Chartier, and Berry. Monstrelet

died in July, 1453, and his chronicle ended in 1443. Its anonymous continuer, whose work then runs parallel with Wavrin's, Mr. Hardy believes to have been John de Wavrin himself.¹

John Harding was another soldier chronicler who fought at Agincourt. He was born in 1378; at the age of twelve was admitted into the house of Sir Henry Percy, known as Hotspur, and served under Percy as a volunteer in the battles of Homildon and Cokelawe. After Percy's death in 1403, John Harding, into whose keeping Percy had given the letters of certain lords, binding them to assist in dethroning King Henry IV., followed the banner of Sir Robert Umfraville, grandson of Gilbert, Earl of Angus. When, in 1405, Umfraville received Warkworth Castle from King Henry IV., for his services in the expedition against Lord Bardolph and the Earl of Northumberland, Harding became his constable; and before Umfraville's death in 1436, he was probably his constable of Ryme Castle, in Lincolnshire. In 1415, Harding, too, aged 37, was among those who fought at Agincourt. But he is not greatly inspired by the theme when he tells "how the kyng came homewarde through Normandy and Picardie, and smote the battaill of Agyncort, wher I was with my maister." This is his style here, and throughout the chronicle. He has neither the mind of a poet nor mechanical skill as a versifier:—

" An hundred mile to Calais had he then
At Agyncourt, so homeward in his waye
The nobles there of Fraunce afore him wen,
Proudly battailed with an hundred thousand in arraie,
He sawe he must nedes with them make afraye;
He sette on them, and with them faught full sore,
With nyne thousand, no more with hym there.

" The feld he had and held it all that night,
But then came woorde of hoste and enemies,
For whiche thei slewe all prisoners doune right,
Sauf dukes and erles, in fell and cruell wise;
And then the prees of enimies did supprise
Their owne people, that mo were dede through pres
Then our menne might have slain that tyme no lese.

¹ What is here said of Wavrin I take from Mr. Hardy's introduction to the 'Recueil des Croniques et Anchiennes Istories de la Grant Bretaigne, à present nommé Engleterre, par Jehan de Waurin, Seigneur du Forestel,' in the series of 'Chronicles and Memorials' (1864).

“On our side was the Duke of Yorke ther slain,
Therle also of Suffolke worshipfully,
And knightes two with other then soth to sain,
And at the siege therle of Suffolke sothely,
The father dyed of the flixe contynually,
But mekell folke at that siege that dyed
Of frute and flixe and colde were mortified.”

Two stanzas then, given to the French losses, complete the account of the battle, thus—

“And fiftene hundred knightes and squyers mo
Were slain that daye in full knightely maner
With woundes so as then did apere.
As werres would upon Chrispyn daye,
And Chrispynian that Sainctes in blisse been aye.”

In the year 1416 this chronicler was with the Duke of Bedford in the sea-fight at the mouth of the Seine. Harding had been employed for three years and a half in Scotland endeavouring to get back the concessions made to Scotland by Mortimer during the minority of Edward III. For services of this kind, tending to recovery of the claim on the kings of Scotland for homage to those of England, Harding was promised the manor of Gedington, in Northamptonshire, but lost it by King Henry V.'s death. In 1424 John Harding was at Rome consulting “the great Chronicle of Trogus Pompeius,” and afterwards he was again most busy for the recovery of deeds bearing on the fealty due to England from the Scottish kings. He says that James I. of Scotland, to whom we shall presently do honour in the company of the poets, offered him a thousand marks if he would embezzle some of the earlier instruments that he procured; others, he says that he obtained by paying four hundred and fifty marks. But some of the deeds of his procuring, by which David II. and Robert II. were made to acknowledge the superiority of England, proved to be forgeries, though it is not proved that he knew them to be so.

The first sketch of his Chronicle¹ ends with the death of Sir Robert Umfraville. It was re-written for Richard Duke of York, father of Edward IV., and although ending with the flight of Henry VI. to Scotland, contains internal evidence that

¹ Lansdowne MS.

Harding was at work on it in 1465. It is an unpoetical rhymed "Chronicle of England unto the reign of King Edward IV.," and was first printed by Richard Grafton, in 1543, with a prose continuation to the thirty-fourth year of the reign of Henry VIII.¹

The reign of Henry VI. extends from the year 1422 to the year 1461. He was born in December, 1421, while his father was besieging Meaux in that last expedition to France from which he was brought back in funeral pomp, leaving a baby nine months old for his successor. The Duke of Bedford was Regent of France, and Humphrey Duke of Gloucester was in his absence made President of the Council, as "Protector of the Realm and Church of England."

The death of Charles VI. made the infant King of England, The Wars of the Roses. by the Treaty of Troyes, sovereign of France, but this claim was resisted. Then follows a dreary record of contention, wasting life and honour, the patriotic inspiration, the success, and the disgrace to the English of the burning of Jeanne d'Arc after her abandonment and sale by men of her own country. Slowly the French ground was reconquered by the French, Burgundy and Scotland being on the side of the French king. Mean passions were let loose in the feud of the old Cardinal Beaufort, brother to Henry IV., against his nephew, the king's uncle Gloucester, the good Duke Humphrey. De la Pole, Duke of Suffolk, the king's favourite, negotiated peace with France, and marriage of the King of England to Margaret of Anjou, surrendering possessions of the English crown in France. Humphrey of Gloucester was treacherously arrested, and within ten days dead. Normandy and Guienne were lost. The English people, who despised their king, hated his queen and his favourite. The Duke of Suffolk, intercepted on his way to the Continent by a great ship called the 'Nicholas of the Tower,' was captured and executed at sea, none asking by whose

¹ 'Chronicle in Metre fro the first Begynning of Englande unto y^e Reigne of Edwarde y^e Fourth, where he made an End of his Chronicle. And from y^e Time is added a Continuacion of the Storie in Prose to this our Tyme,' &c. Lond. in Offic. Ricardi Grafton, Januari, 1543. 4to. 'Harding's Chronicle' was carefully re-edited with a biographical and literary preface by Sir Henry Ellis in 1812.

authority. The disaffected people furnished thousands to the back of Jack Cade, who called himself of the house of Mortimer, and raised his standard for the restoration of the rightful York and suppression of the rule of the exhausted line of Lancaster. Cade was at Blackheath with twenty thousand men, sending to parliament his Requests of the Men of Kent. The king was in arms. Victorious Jack Cade was in the city. After Cade's followers had been dispersed, and Cade killed for the price upon his head, Henry's imbecility became insanity, and Richard of York was appointed the king's guardian and governor of the realm. Henry recovered reason enough to resume his power; the Duke of Somerset, nearest relation of the line of Lancaster, and enemy to the Duke of York, was recalled to council, and the Duke of York retired to Ludlow Castle, where, with his son, Edward of March, who afterwards became king, he gathered force enough to attack the king and Somerset in their garrison at St. Alban's. There Somerset, who led the Lancastrians, was killed, the king wounded by an arrow, taken prisoner, and first blood drawn in the civil wars of the Roses. But after this battle of St. Alban's, fought (May 22) on a spring day in 1455, there was rest from the actual clash of arms while strife continued for supremacy under the feeble rule of a king whose mind, weak through disease, swayed in its clearer hours towards a kindly piety. It was in the interval of four or five years between the first battle at St. Alban's and the renewal of bloodshed by intestine strife, that the proceedings of the year 1457 against one of the most remarkable of our early prose writers, give us fresh insight into the religious movements of the nation.

In the reign of Henry VI. there was a Bishop of St. Asaph and Chichester named Reginald Pecock, who was probably a Welchman. He was born towards the end of the fourteenth century, studied at Oriel College, Oxford, was elected to a fellowship October 30th, 1417, was admitted to priest's orders in March, 1421, and was described afterwards as a priest of the diocese of St. David's. He proceeded to the degree of Bachelor in Divinity, soon afterwards was summoned to Court, and in 1431, when Humphrey Duke of Gloucester was Protector, Pecock was made Master of Whittington College, and Rector of St. Michael in Riola. After this he was resident

in London for thirteen years, taking active interest in the religious controversies that were still active, and seeking by many tracts written in English to convince the Lollards. About the year 1440 Pecock produced a 'Donet,' or Introduction to the chief Truths of the Christian Religion, in the form of a dialogue between father and son. The second part is against the Lollards, who "impugn the device of this book." A 'Follower of Donet' appeared some years later. In 1444 Humphrey of Gloucester, a lover of books and patron of learning, upon the translation of John Lowe to Rochester, made Reginald Pecock Bishop of St. Asaph. He was at the same time admitted to the degree of Doctor of Divinity, without keeping any exercise or act. The bishops were in those days blamed by the Lollards for not preaching. Pecock, an earnest energetic man, apt at the pen, undertook to defend his order, and in a sermon preached at Paul's Cross, in 1447, argued—although he preached frequently in his own diocese—that bishops were freed from the burden of preaching because they had duties of higher character. He argued also the just causes there might be for the non-residence that was another frequent charge against the higher clergy. The people were only the more incensed by the vindication, and many of the clergy were displeased. This sermon was the beginning of a course of offence against the Church, which is of great interest to us of after times, because it consisted mainly in a defence of the Church based on arguments addressed to the reason. Pecock came down from the heights of infallibility, rested the case of the clergy upon simple logic, and took what was held to be the perilous step of accepting Reason as sufficient guide to the determination of the questions in dispute between the laity and those of the clergy who most obstinately held by what the Lollards denounced as corruptions.

It was in the middle of the century, or about the year 1449, that Reginald Pecock was busy upon his most famous work, 'The Repressor of Over Much Blaming of the Clergy,'¹ which has been edited by Mr. Churchill Babington for the series of 'Chronicles and Memorials' published

¹ 'The Repressor of Over Much Blaming of the Clergy. By Reginald Pecock, D.D., sometime Lord Bishop of Chichester. Edited by Churchill

under the direction of the Master of the Rolls. The book was written at the very time when Pecock was raised to the see of Chichester in place of his friend Adam Moleyns, to whose murder, in June 1449, the Yorkists appear to have been privy. He had been raised to the see of St. Asaph by the good Duke Humphrey, of whose death William De la Pole, created, by favour of Margaret of Anjou, Duke of Suffolk, was accounted by the English people guilty. It was by the influence of this hated De la Pole, and of the Bishop of Norwich, who was Queen Margaret's confessor, that Pecock was made Bishop of Chichester. De la Pole was, as we have seen, soon afterwards executed at sea when going into banishment. The Bishop of Norwich was cast out, and friends of theirs, or men believed to be so, were detested.

The 'Repressor' was wholly meant as a defence of the clergy against what Pecock held to be the unjust aspersions of the "Bible Men," and was planned to show that the clergy had reason for those practices which had incurred over much blame. He undertook to justify eleven, but did, in fact, restrict himself to six: namely, the use of images, the going on pilgrimage, the holding of landed possessions by the clergy, the various ranks of the hierarchy, the framing of ecclesiastical laws by Papal and Episcopal authority, and the institution of the religious orders. For argument upon the other five topics he refers to others of his works then written or in preparation. Pecock's 'Repressor' is upon the topics it discusses—topics still more or less subjects of controversy in the nineteenth century—a repertory of the best fifteenth-century arguments on both sides. One of the old arguments against pilgrimages was the rendering of the text (1 Peter iv. 12), now translated "Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you," which Wiclif translated "Nile ye go in pilgrimage in feruour which is maad to you to temptacioun;" and Pecock was no better scholar than to suppose that Cephas meant a head, and argue therefrom that because Peter was called Cephas, therefore the Pope was to be Head of the Church. But while Pecock exalted the Pope's

Babington, B.D., Fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge.' 2 vols. London, 1860. Pecock's own title is 'The Repressing of Over Miche Wijting the Clergie.'

supremacy, he conceded to his opponents that in Scripture was the only rule of faith, and urged that doctrines should be proved therefrom by reason.

This, however, he did while opposing the demand of the Lollards for authority of Scripture in the less important matters of usage, lay or clerical. "In all Holy Scripture," he said, "it is not expressed by bidding, counselling, or witnessing, or by any ensampling of person, that a layman not a priest should wear a breech, or that he should wear a cloak, or that he should wear a gown, or that he should dye woollen cloth into any other colour than is the colour of sheep, or that men shoulde bake any flesh or fish in an oven, or that men should make and use clocks for to know the hours of the day and night. . . . Where is it expressed by word or by any person's ensampling in Holy Scripture, that men shoulde make ale or beer, of which so much horrible sin cometh, much more than of setting up of images or of pilgrimages; and the defaults done about images and pilgrimages had ben much lighter and easier to be amended than the defaults coming by making of ale and beer." But while thus arguing against the demands of extreme "Bible men" for Scripture sanction of all usages, Reginald Pecock accepted the simple rule of Scripture in all spiritual matters, and quoted St. Peter's doctrine that every man ought to be able to give an answer to him who asks, and a reason of the hope that is in him. "Certes," he said, "without argument can no truth be known neither learned in the intellect of man . . . right so thilke faith or conclusion of belief is not worthy to be held true, but if he may be sustained by his proper to him grounds, and evidences pertaining to the grounding of faith; and but if sufficient answer can be give to all arguing which can be made there against, God forbid that any man should so trow and feel that any conclusion of faith ought to be hold for true and for faith and yet could be proved by any argument to be untrue and false; and that any argument could be made against any conclusion of true faith, to which argument it could not clearly at full be answered." And he went on to argue that the more truth is inquired into, whether in nature or religion, and the more perfectly it thus becomes known, the more perfectly will it become established against all gainsayers.

This manner of repressing the over-much blame of the clergy seemed to most of Pecock's brother bishops an abandoning of outworks to the enemy in the name of defence of the citadel. But Pecock, as far as a man well could be in his day, was against the compulsion of the martyr fires. The clergy, he said in this 'Repressor,' shall be condemned at the last day, "if by clear wit they draw not men into consent of true faith otherwise than by fire, sword, and hangment; although I will not deny these second means to be lawful, provided the former be first used." And clear wit it must be, for, said the Bishop, "Whenever and wherever, in Holy Scripture or out of Holy Scripture, be written any point or any governance of the said law of kind" (nature), "it is more verily written in the book of man's soul than in the outward book of parchment or of vellum; and if any seeming discord be betwixt the words written in the outward book of Holy Scripture, and the doom of reason writ in man's soul and heart, the words so written without forth oughten to be expowned and interpreted, and brought for to accord with the doom of reason in thilk matter; and the doom of reason ought not for to be expowned, glosed, interpreted, and brought for to accord with the said outward writing in Holy Scripture of the Bible, or anywhere else out of the Bible." He pointed out also how greatly Scripture could be misinterpreted, and in reply to those who said that none can err in studying the Bible, said that "there is no book written in the world by which a man shall rather take occasion for to err."

A Bishop who thought for himself after this fashion, denying to the Lollards that deductions from their reading of the Bible were infallible, denying also to his brethren of the hierarchy the right to claim an uninquiring faith in dogmas of the Church, opposed himself to the passions of the combatants on either side, and had himself no partisans.¹ The Celtic blood in him may have had some part in the stir of Pecock's busy zeal, and

¹ Mr. Babington, I think, appreciates Pecock but imperfectly in the excellent introduction to the 'Repressor,' to which I am indebted for much information. The best estimate of his relation to the thought of his time is that contained in two articles on Bible study in the fifteenth century, contributed to Nos. 6 and 7 of the 'Fortnightly Review,' by Mr. James Gairdner of the Record Office.

stimulated his audacity in taking independent ground among the theologians, for so, among the people of this island from the time of Pelagius downward, in theology, in history, in poetry,—witness Erigena, Geoffrey of Monmouth, Walter Map,—the spirit of the Celt has emboldened the shrewd sense of the dutiful and earnest Anglo-Saxon.¹ Bishops, friars, many of whom he had called “pulpit bawlers,” Lollards and temporal lords, all were against Pecock. In 1457, a Council was held at Westminster in which no temporal lord would speak till Pecock was expelled from it. He had appealed on profound subjects to common reason, in the language of the people; his ‘Repressor’ indeed, of great interest as a piece of natural fifteenth-century English, is one of the best and most considerable specimens of early prose among the treasures of our literature. He had denied that the Apostles composed the Apostles’ Creed. He would take the word of the ancient doctors only for so much of their teaching as was agreeable to reason; he had even been known to say “Pooh! pooh!” when passages from the Fathers were produced against him.

The divines at the Council proceeded against the over-bold Repressor and his books. He appeared with nine of his books, including the ‘Repressor.’ Four-and-twenty doctors were appointed to examine them. They were to report to four prelates acting as judges, two of whom were Archbishop Bourchier and Waynflete, Bishop of Winchester. The doctors reported that Pecock’s works contained many heresies; that his ‘Book of Faith’ was unfit to be read, because he denied the saying of St. Gregory that “faith has no merit of whose truth human reason gives proof.” For this and other specified heresies he was called a sickly sheep, and condemned either to abjure or to be burnt. He abjured, delivering instead of himself his books, three folios and eleven quartos, to the executioner for public burning. He had said that the Church, if it could not by clear wit convince of heresy, might lawfully take the second way of fire, sword, and hangment. To the reserved power of the Church, that in his calmest and boldest times of free speech he had not denied, as a bishop who had never refused

¹ See vol. i. pp. 187, 8; 379, 80; 396-502; 555.

fealty to ecclesiastical authority, it was in accordance with his own logic that he yielded. His accusers could not convince him, but as he had never denied the right of the Church to compel obedience, he obeyed as soon as the compulsion was put on himself. The University of Oxford burnt his books at Carfax. John Bury, a friar, wrote by order of the primate a treatise in confutation of the 'Repressor.' After some months Pecock was deprived of his See. He appealed to Rome, and Bulls from Rome commanded restoration of his bishopric. But it was determined and contrived that he should be never more a bishop. John Arundel, the king's physician, was appointed to succeed him, and Pecock spent the rest of his days as a recluse in the Abbey of Thorney, in Cambridgeshire. Forty pounds a year were allowed for his maintenance. He was to have a private room within sight of an altar, so that he might hear mass without leaving his chamber. He was to be excused from dining in the hall, to have one attendant to light his fire and make his bed; but he was to have access to no books but a breviary, a mass book, a psalter, a legend, and a Bible, and he must never again put pen to paper. For how many years did he live thus, the tomb of his own busy mind? None know. The doors of Thorney Abbey closed on him. There is no more to tell.

John Capgrave, born at Lynn in Norfolk, on the 21st of April, 1393, was sent while young to one of the Eng-^{John Capgrave.}lish Universities, probably, as Leland guesses, Cambridge, although there can be little doubt that he took his degree of Doctor of Divinity at Oxford, where he is said to have interpreted publicly the Old and New Testament. It was at the age of twenty-four that he entered the priesthood, and he was in London at the time of the birth of Henry VI. in 1422, though, doubtless, his home then was in the house of the Austin Friars at Lynn, which had a considerable library. Soon after he had taken the degree of Doctor of Divinity, John Capgrave was made Provincial of his Order in England, and it is probable that he also presided over the Friary at Lynn, where he died on the 12th of August, 1464, aged seventy. He was accounted one of the most learned men of his time, and wrote many works that have been left unprinted besides his printed 'Chronicle of

England' and 'Book of the Noble Henries.' He wrote a commentary on the Book of Genesis, of which the extant MS. is that which was presented by him at Penshurst to Duke Humphrey of Gloucester. He wrote also commentaries on the other books of the Pentateuch, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, and the Books of Kings; the commentary on Kings also presented to Duke Humphrey. He wrote commentaries on the Psalter, on Ecclesiastes, on Isaiah, Daniel, and the Twelve Minor Prophets; on the Epistles of St. Paul (dedicated to Duke Humphrey), on the Canonical Epistles, on the Acts and Apocalypse. He wrote also on the Creeds, also a 'Manual of Christian Doctrine,' also 'Theological Conclusions,' 'Sermons for a Year,' 'Scholastic Lectures,' 'Ordinary Disputations,' 'Addresses to the Clergy on the Sentences of Peter Lombard,' 'On the Followers of St. Augustine,' 'Of Illustrious Men of the Order of St. Augustine,' 'The Life of St. Augustine,' the Life also of Duke Humphrey of Gloucester. All these works were written in Latin. He wrote an English 'Life of St. Gilbert of Sempringham,' a work of which the only MS. was destroyed in 1731 by the fire in the Cotton Library. He wrote in English rhyme a 'Life of St. Katherine,' in two books, of which three MSS. remain. It professes to be a reshaping of the antique rhymes of a priest named Arreck, who had died at Lynne many years before Capgrave's time, and whose enthusiasm for St. Katherine had caused him to spend eighteen of his years, and twelve of them in Greece, upon a search for records of her history. At last by direction of a vision, in the days of Peter King of Cyprus and Pope Urban V., Arreck dug up in Cyprus, from under the flowers and grass of a field, an old book of the very matter, written by Athanasius, her tutor, and hidden there a hundred years before by Amylon Fitz-Amarach. As for the good priest who made the discovery and wrote the antique English rhymes,

"He is nough ded, this good man, this preest,
He deyed at Lynne, many year agoo ;

Of the West Cuntre it semeth that he was,
Be his manner of speche, and be his style,
He was somtyme persone of Seynt Pancras
In the cyte of London, a ful grete while.
He is now above us ful many myle.

He be a mene to Kataryne for us,
And she for us onto oure Lord Jesus.
After hym next I take upon me
To translate this story and set it more playne."

Capgrave wrote also a Latin 'Sanctilogium,' printed in 1516 by Wynkyn de Worde as 'Nova Legenda Angliæ,' but his most important works were his Latin 'Book of the Noble Henries,' dedicated to King Henry VI., and his 'Chronicle of England,' written in English, and dedicated to King Edward IV.¹ Capgrave's Chronicle begins with the Creation, and after rapid compilation of the earlier events, introduces many fresh details into its concise narrative of the course of English history in his own time. As a hearty orthodox churchman this chronicler detested Wiclif and the Lollards, but as an Englishman he sympathized with resistance to aggressions of the Papal See upon his king's prerogative or on the just rights of his countrymen. Capgrave's 'Book of the Noble Henries' begins with a brief history of the six Henries of the Empire, glorifies in a second part the six Henries of England, and in a third part celebrates twelve illustrious men who have borne that name. A great name, he says, is Henricus, for in Hebrew Hen means "Behold the Fountain" or "Behold the Eye," Ri or Rei is "My Shepherd" or "My Pasture," and Cus is "an Æthiopian" or "Dark:" because he who is crowned with this name is as a fountain for which the hart longs, and blessed are the eyes which see as he sees; our king also is leader of the flock, a pasture because men are fed by his good works, and dark or Æthiopian because there is no spot or blackness in him.

But of all chronicles of this time the most interesting is a budget of familiar and business letters preserved by the Paston family, of which a little questioning has lately placed the authenticity beyond dispute.

¹ Capgrave's Book of the noble Henries and his Chronicle were edited, in 1857 and 1858, by the Rev. F. C. Hingeston for the Rolls series of 'Chronicles and Memorials.' In a corresponding volume, but not one of the official series, Mr. Hingeston also issued in 1858 a translation of Capgrave's 'Book of the Illustrious Henries.'

In 1787 there appeared two quarto volumes of 'Original
The Paston Letters. Letters written during the Reigns of Henry VI.,
Edward IV., and Richard III., by various persons of
rank or consequence; containing many curious Anecdotes
relative to that turbulent, bloody, but hitherto dark, period of
our history; and elucidating not only public matters of state,
but likewise the private manners of the age, digested in chrono-
logical order with notes historical and explanatory and authen-
ticated by engravings of autographs, paper marks and seals, by
John Fenn, Esq., M.A. and F.A.S.' This is the editor's descrip-
tion on his title-page of a collection of family letters written
during the Wars of the Roses, which are now commonly known
as the 'Paston Letters,' because most of them were written by
or to particular persons of the family of Paston in Norfolk.
They were preserved by that family for several generations,
passed then into the possession of the Earl of Yarmouth, and
next into the possession of Peter le Neve, who was made Norroy
King of Arms in 1704. The marriage of a learned antiquary,
Thomas Martin of Palgrave, in Suffolk, with Mrs. le Neve
caused the transfer of the Paston Letters to the collections of
Mr. Martin, which were bought, for selling again, by Mr. John
Worth, an apothecary and chemist at Diss, in Norfolk. Mr.
Worth died in 1774, before he had completed the sale of his
collection, and it was then that the curious collection of the Paston
Letters came into the hands of the antiquary who, as Mr. Fenn,
began their publication with two quartos in 1787, as Sir John
Fenn published two more volumes of them in 1789, and who
had before his death in 1794 prepared a fifth volume. The
publication was authenticated with facsimiles of 3 letters, 187
signatures, 98 paper-marks, and 56 seals, which have borne all
scrutiny and test of later knowledge of the old handwritings.
The originals were placed by Sir John Fenn for a time with the
Antiquarian Society, and afterwards presented to King George
III. They are now lost. The letters of the fifth volume, bring-
ing down the correspondence to the latter end of the reign of
Henry VII., were partly in the hand of Sir John Fenn, partly
in that of a transcriber whom he had employed, and the copy
so made remained in the hands of Sir John Fenn's widow till

her death in 1814. It then passed to her nephew Mr. Frere, who published it in 1823 as the fifth and last volume of the series; but he had not succeeded in finding the original letters from which the copies had been made by Sir John Fenn and his transcriber. Very recently, however, they have been discovered, together with a few unpublished letters and two or three of the letters that had been included by Sir John Fenn in his earlier volumes.¹

Besides the family and friendly letters of the Pastons there are in the first two printed volumes of the series letters to John Paston from Richard Neville Earl of Warwick, Richard Plantagenet Duke of York, John de Vere Earl of Oxford, George Neville Archbishop of York, John Howard Duke of Norfolk, John de le Pole of Suffolk; letters to and from Sir John Fastolf and others illustrating the career of persons of high mark in history. When Sir John Fenn prepared his next two volumes he had chiefly the more private letters left to him; the third and fourth volumes therefore, although still containing letters and papers from or concerning men of historical mark, are valuable as illustrations of domestic manners. The fifth volume continues the series from the date at which the former collection closed, namely, the year 1470 to the year 1505. The whole series of Paston Letters extends from 1422 to 1505; the majority of the letters being addressed to John Paston, Esq., who died in 1466, to Sir John Paston, his son, who died in 1479, and John Paston of Gelston, who died in 1503. Of the reign of Henry VI. the number of letters is 163; of the reign of Edward IV., 273; there is one of the reign of Edward V., there are 9 of the reign of Richard III., and 40 of the reign of Henry VII., making in all 486.

Most to our purpose among the many suggestions of Eng-

¹ The authenticity of the 'Paston Letters' was acutely questioned by Mr. Herman Merivale, in the eighth number of the 'Fortnightly Review,' and may be said to have been demonstrated by argument in a reply by Mr. James Gairdner, of the Record Office, which appeared in No. 11 of the same journal, before the attention thus called to the subject and discussion at the Antiquarian Society produced the discovery of the letters forming the fifth volume, and Mr. Merivale's cordial admission that his doubts were set at rest.

lish life in the fifteenth century which these letters bring home to us is an inventory of John Paston's English books, made in an unnamed year of the reign of Edward IV.¹ They are, Chaucer's 'Troilus and Cressida,'² two copies of Chaucer's 'Parliament of Birds,'³ Lydgate's Temple of Glass, two copies of Alain Chartier's 'Belle Dame sans Merci,'⁴ 'Guy Earl of Warwick,' 'Guy and Colbrond,'⁵ 'The Green Knight,' 'The Death of King Arthur,'⁶ 'Lamentations of the Child Ipotis,' 'King Richard Cœur de Lion,' 'Palatyse and Sirtacus,' 'The Disputation between Hope and Despair,' 'Meeds of the Mass,' 'A Prayer to the Vernicle,' Cicero 'de Senectute,' 'de Amicitia,' 'de Sapientia,' an English metrical version of the 'de Regimine Principum,' 'Myn olde boke off Blasonyngs off armes,' the new book of the same, book of knighthood and of the manner of making knights, statutes of war, and a book of new statutes of Edward IV.

There were a few other works, of which the names, as well as the annexed values of all, are lost by damage to the inventory, but here evidently is a right suggestion of the character of the books read by an educated English gentlemen in the reign of King Edward IV. This little library had been collected with much care. Another of the Paston Letters is from a copyist, W. Ebesham, who says that he is living at some expense in the Sanctuary, Westminster, in 1468, and sends in his bill for copies of books that he has been employed to make for John Paston, as :—

	s.	d.
" Itm for 'De Regimine Principum,' which conteyneth xlv ^{ti} leves, after a peny a leef, which is right wele worth .	iii	ix
Itm for Rubrissheyng of all the booke	iii	iv."

Rubrishing was the adornment with red, in capitals and so forth, which raised the cost of copying to nearly twopence a leaf. The actual book thus copied is, with others produced by the same copyist for the same customer, among the Lansdowne MSS. of the British Museum.⁸ It is the metrical version of the 'De Regimine Principum' in the favourite metre afterwards

¹ 'Paston Letters,' vol. ii. pp. 300-304.

³ See pp. 195-198.

⁶ See vol. i. p. 565.

⁴ See p. 223.

⁷ See p. 304.

² See pp. 224, 243.

⁵ See vol. i. p. 661.

⁸ MS. Lansdowne, 285.

called rhyme royal, which was begun by Lydgate, and said to have been completed by Benedict Burgh. The original work, sometimes called in English 'The Governail of Princes,' and sometimes 'The Book of all good Thewes,' is known to us already as the basis of the seventh book of Gower's 'Confessio Amantis.' We find, then, that, at the time of the invention of printing, the library of an English country gentleman who cared about reading consisted of a few moral and religious books, books of blazonings of arms, knighthood, laws of war and law of the land, some of the works of Chaucer, the Governail of Princes, the English version of the Belle Dame sans Merci, Mort Artus, Guy of Warwick, and about half-a-dozen other romances. The romance of the Green Knight was one of the tales of King Arthur's nephew, Sir Gawayne.¹ The Green Knight came, as a green monster riding a green foal, to Arthur's court on New Year's Day to try the temper of its champions. He would abide one stroke from any of the knights upon condition that, next New Year's Day, that knight should come and abide, in turn, a stroke from him. Gawayne accepted the challenge and struck off the head of the Green Knight, who then picked his head up, turned it towards Guenevere, spoke through it, bidding Gawayne look for him at the green chapel, and rode out at the hall door with his head still in his hand. Gawayne honourably fulfilled his pledge, and by resisting the enticements of his host's wife, escaped with his life, getting only a scratch on his neck for a slight failure of faith, and bringing home a magical green girdle. His return with such a trophy caused the Knights of the Round Table ever after to wear a bright green belt for Gawayne's sake.²

The Lamentation of the Child Ypotis is a legend, said to be attested to St. John the Evangelist, of a holy child whom the Emperor Adrian at Rome set on his knees.³ 'Richard Cœur

¹ See vol. i. ch. xxi. for account of Sir Gawayne and other old romances.

² 'Sir Gawayne and the Greene Knight' was first edited by Sir F. Madden for the Roxburghe Club, and in 1864 was edited by Mr. Morris from a MS. of the fourteenth century, for the Early English Text Society. The few lines in the text describing the romance are taken from a paper of my own in No. 255 of the 'Edinburgh Review.'

³ The first lines of it are quoted from the Cotton MS., Caligula, A. 2, f. 77, and Vernon, f. 296, in a note by Warton to his History of English Poetry (ed. 1824, vol. ii. p. 41.)

de Lion,' as first printed by Wynkyn de Worde in 1509, and doubtless as the Pastons read it in Edward IV.'s time, was an extravagant French romance which seems to have been written in the days of Edward I., and some years afterwards translated into English.¹

W. Ebesham's account for copying gives us an opportunity also of estimating the cost of books at the time when the printers were about to reduce it by their new method of multiplying copies. The charge was twopence a leaf for solid prose, a penny a leaf for verse of about thirty lines to the page. Much red-letter decoration doubled the expense. The decoration of the 'De Regimine Principum' charged for as we have seen in Ebesham's bill, consists of one initial letter, small blue and red marginal paragraph marks, a little pen scratch of red ink across the first letter of every line, and light lines of red ink rapidly scratched to bracket all the rhymes. On the whole, then, we may infer that at the present value of money good copies, with here and there a red initial or red chapter-heading, appear to have cost, when complete, about two shillings a leaf for closely-written prose, or a shilling a leaf for verse.² A carpenter's wages being at that time about sixpence a day, the first-class copyist must produce three leaves of prose to bring his earnings to the level of those of a skilled mechanic. But he could do much more.

Paper began to take the place of parchment about the middle of the fourteenth century, but was not made in England. It was used in account keeping as frequently as parchment after the accession of Richard II.³ One point also may be noticed in the letter accompanying W. Ebesham's bill for copies made. He speaks of the expense of living in the Sanctuary at Westminster. Does not this indicate a transition stage of the Scriptorium, in hireable lodgings and appliances for professional

¹ It occupies 278 pages of the second volume of Weber's 'Metrical Romances' (Edinburgh, 1810). There is a sketch of it in Ellis's 'Early English Metrical Romances.'

² I value the penny at nine pence or ten pence, and paper at about a penny a leaf in money of our time.

³ Some valuable notes on the price of paper and books in the fourteenth century will be found in Professor Thorold Rogers's 'History of Agriculture and Prices in England,' vol. i. pp. 644-647.

copyists within the Abbey walls? Eleven years later, Caxton, copyist in the new manner, issued from the same place the first of his books that names the place of impression. It said only that it was printed "at Westminster," but the whereabouts was more accurately defined in 1480, when the 'Chronicles of England' were said to be "Emprynted by me, William Caxton, in th Abbey of Westmynstre by London."

For there are the first rays of a great light now piercing the darkness of these days of strife. At Mentz, in the year of the battle of St. Alban's, 1455, the Bible called the ^{Invention of Printing.} Mazarin, because a copy of it was found in Cardinal Mazarin's library, was printed by John Gutenberg. In the year of the condemnation of Reginald Pecock for declaring that all truth would bear the test of reason and inquiry, John Fust, or Faust, and Peter Schœffer printed a magnificent edition of the Psalter.

Stamping with ink from blocks, on which letters are carved in relief, had been long customary in China, when this contrivance to save labour of the copyist was first ^{Block Books.} thought of in Europe, and applied in Holland to the diffusion of the Scriptures. In Europe pictures, without letters, are said to have been cut upon wood as early as the year 1285; but the earliest dated print from such a block is inscribed 1423. Playing cards were printed from blocks before the death of Chaucer. Rude pictures cut in wood, illustrative of Scripture history, the chief incidents in the Pentateuch, the Gospels, and the Apocalypse, were printed from the blocks and bound for the use of poor men as 'Bibles of the Poor,' *Biblia Pauperum*.¹

It was about the year 1438, when John Gutenberg of Mentz first thought of the use of movable types to save the great labour of cutting a fresh block for every page. He had gone from Mentz to Strasburg as a block-printer, become impoverished by a lawsuit, returned to Mentz and worked at his press in partnership with a wealthy goldsmith, named John Faust or Fust. After many experiments so much success was

¹ The fullest information on this subject will be found in the 'Principia Typographica,' containing facsimiles from Dutch, Flemish, and German Block-books, published by Mr. S. Leigh Sotheby in 1858.

attained, that, as before said, the printing of the Mazarin Bible was completed with movable type in 1455. The partnership was dissolved and Gutenberg, unable to pay advances of money, made over his types to Faust, who printed copies of the Bible to imitate those sold as MSS., and kept his secret until the doubts excited by his rapid multiplication of copies and his readiness to sell for sixty crowns what the copyists required five hundred for producing, caused him to be informed against as a magician. His lodgings were searched and many copies found; their red-ink embellishments were said to have been done with his blood. So runs the tradition that connects the history of Faust the Printer with the legendary Doctor Faustus. Faust took his son-in-law Peter Schœffer as a partner, and in the colophon to the Psalter produced by them in 1457, Faust and Schœffer boasted openly the power of their new art. After a few years the sack of Mentz under Archbishop Adolphus, by scattering the pupils and workmen of Faust and Schœffer, dispersed through Europe the knowledge of their art. It was carried from Mentz to Haarlem and Strasburg, from Haarlem to Rome in 1466, by Sweynheym and Pannartz, the first users of Roman type. It reached Paris in 1469, England in 1474, Scotland not until 1507—its establisher in England being William Caxton, its establisher in Scotland Walter Chepman.

Four years after the production at Mentz of the first printed Bible, there died at Florence, in 1459, a famous Italian scholar, Poggio Bracciolini, who was the chief representative of the activity of the Italian intellect in search for the lost MSS. which contained treasures of ancient thought. Petrarch had been active in this direction;¹ for Poggio the search was a passion, and its successes were many and great. He was the first who found a complete copy of 'Quintilian.' It was in the monastery of St. Gall, buried under rubbish with some other treasure in the cellar-floor or dungeon of a tower, "not even," said Poggio, "a fit residence for a condemned criminal." He discovered also several lost orations of Cicero, and, among his other recoveries to literature, were Lucretius, Silius Italicus, Ammianus Marcellinus, Columella, and Tertullian. Through

Poggio Bracciolini.

¹ See p. 29.

an agent, Nicholas of Trèves, whom Poggio employed to search the monasteries of Germany, twelve were added to the eight comedies which had been all that were left of Plautus.

John of Gaunt's wealthy Churchman son, Cardinal Beaufort, when Bishop of Winchester, tempted Poggio to ^{Visits Eng-} England with good promises, and the Italian scholar ^{land.} came among us in the year 1419. While he was searching English monasteries and finding nothing that he cared for but the 'Chronicle of Sigebert,' while he was also suing Beaufort for fulfilment of his promises, he was tantalised by the news that others had found in Italy the whole of Cicero's 'De Oratore,' besides other of his works. After much trouble with Beaufort, Poggio says that "the mountain laboured and brought forth a mouse;" he was offered a benefice nominally, not actually, worth one hundred and twenty florins. No letters of his from England have been published, and there is no suggestion of literature in the occasional mention of us in his writings. He reports of the desire of English nobles to live in the country and own large estates, not thinking it derogatory to trade in the produce of their land. He reports also their respect for dinners; even if they should meet a host ten days after he had given them a dinner, they never omitted the ceremony of thanks for his entertainment. There were county families and dinner parties, there was hunting, too, in high esteem, as Juliana Berners witnesses.

Dame Julyans Barnes, otherwise Juliana Berners, is supposed to have been born at the close of the fourteenth cen- ^{Juliana Ber-} tury at Roding-Berners, hundred of Dunmow, in Essex. ^{ners.}

She is doubtfully described as daughter to a Sir James Berners, beheaded in 1388 as one of the evil counsellors of Richard II., and it is said that she was living in 1460, and was Lady Prioress of Sopwell, a nunnery founded about the year 1140, near St. Alban's, in which Abbey of St. Alban's her writings in her native tongue, of the 'Art of Hawking,' the 'Art of Hunting,' and the 'Laws of Arms,' were first printed in 1486. She is called Dame because her name is written "Dame Julyans Barnes" in the colophon to the first impression of her Book of Hunting. The nuns were classed as Dames, or choir-nuns, who usually had property and paid for their maintenance, and as Lay-sisters

who, being less rich, waited on the Dames. But a Lay-sister would become a Dame if she were promoted to sing in the choir, or if, as might be, she were elected Abbess. That Dame Juliana Berners, in her character of Lady Prioress, herself went hunting and hawking, as if she were a lady not vowed to seclusion from the world, is possible,¹ considering what we have read of canons who "give alms to their dogs, not to the poor;" of rectors who, "when they speak of God, think of a hare:" and of the monk, an outrider "who loved venerie":²

"Of pricking and of hunting for the hare
Was all his lust, for no cost wolde he spare."

But Juliana Berners may have passed out of the world into the cloister. There are ascribed to her, also, a small book 'On Fishing,' and a book 'On the Blazon of Arms.' The treatises are technical, and therefore of great interest to the historian of field-sport. The others being in prose, the 'Book of Hunting' is written in rhyme, after this fashion:

Bestys of Venery.

"Where so euer ye fare by fryth or by fell :
My dere chylde take hede how Trystam doo you tell.
How many manere bestys of venery there were :
Lysten to your dame and she shall you leere.
Foure manere bestis of venere there are :
The fyrste of theym is the harte : the seconde is the hare,
The boore is one of tho : the wulfe and not one mo ! "

But as the cruelty of the old forest-laws was fading already into the past, that feudal spirit also, which made the great nobles of England, as Poggio said,³ "deem it disgraceful to reside in cities and prefer living in retirement in the country,"

¹ The text of the treatises of Juliana Berners, as printed by Wynkyn de Worde, in 1496, was published with full biographical and bibliographical introduction by Mr. Joseph Haslewood in 'Literary Researches into the History of the Book of St. Alban's,' with 1810 as the date on the black-letter title-page, and Oct. 1811, the date appended to the introductory dissertations. This volume is the most complete repertory of information on the subject of Dame Juliana Berners.

² See pp. 52, 96, 295.

³ In his Dialogue on Nobility. I quote from the 'Life of Poggio de Bracciolini,' by the Rev. Wm. Shepherd, LL.D. Liverpool, 1837.

was about to give way to the rising influence and wealth of towns.

The laws of England, too, had their foundations laid already, not like the French laws in the principle of the civil code that the will of the monarch is law, but in the will of the people by their representatives. The soundness of the principle, however rudely applied, that made the people taxers of themselves, and themselves tryers by jury of offences done among themselves, produced a contrast between the condition of an Englishman and of a Frenchman in this fifteenth century, which was vividly described by Sir John Fortescue, who saw them both, and justly ascribes to the political mixed government of England the exemption of the commonalty from those privations and oppressions which afflicted the French villagers, and of which his painful account is borne out by the according testimony of Philip de Commines.

One of the descendents of the Richard le Fort who was recorded or fabled to have saved the life of the Conqueror at the battle of Hastings under shelter of his shield, and so established the family motto, "Forte scutum, salus Ducum," was Sir John Fortescue, probably the son of another Sir John Fortescue, who was made Governor of Meux after the taking of that town in 1422.¹ Sir John Fortescue, famous as an early writer on the laws of England, is supposed to have been born on his mother's estate of Norreis, in the Devonshire parish of North Huish. He was educated, Bishop Tanner says, at Exeter College, Oxford, studied law at Lincoln's Inn, took the degree of Serjeant-at-law in 1429; in 1440 and 1441 was acting as a Judge of Assize, on the Norfolk circuit; and at Easter, 1441, was named one of the King's Serjeants. In January, 1442, without having taken any intermediate step, Sir John Fortescue was made Chief Justice of the King's Bench, where he presided until 1460. Fortescue was present at the battle of Towton, fled with King Henry to Scotland and Wales. The post of Lord

¹ He has been commonly described as the son of his brother Sir Henry Fortescue, Chief-Justice of the King's Bench in Ireland from June, 1426 to Feb. 1429. See the 'Judges of England,' by Edward Foss, F.S.A., vol. iv. pp. 308-315. I have relied on the careful work of Mr. Foss for what is said of Sir John Fortescue.

Chancellor, which Fortescue claims to have held, he may have held in exile nominally, but without possession of the seals or valid authority.

In the first Parliament of Edward IV., Sir John Fortescue, as one of those who fought at Towton, was attainted of high treason. His possessions were forfeited to the king, by whom they were partly granted to Lord Wenlock. In 1463 he was in Lorraine, with the queen and prince "all in grete poverté, but yet the quene susteyneth us in mete and drinke, so as we both not in extreme necessite." It was, probably, while thus an exile in Lorraine that he wrote his most famous work, '*De Laudibus Legum Angliæ*,' for the instruction of the young prince. This was in Latin; but he wrote also, in like spirit, a book in English on the 'Difference between Absolute and Limited Monarchy,' or, as he calls them, '*Dominium Regale*' and '*Dominium Politicum et Regale*.' In 1471 he returned with the queen to England, and in May 4th of that year was taken prisoner at the battle of Tewkesbury. The king to whom he had been faithful and the prince whom he had taught were dead. He retracted, therefore, all that he had written against Edward's title, and obtained in October, 1473, the reversal of his attainder. He was living in 1476, and is said to have died at the age of ninety. Sir John Fortescue's Latin work upon the 'Praises of the Laws of England' is, says Mr. Foss, the accurate author of the '*Lives of the Judges of England*,' the first which treats the abstruse subject of the principles of our law in a popular form; and may still be read with benefit and pleasure. It was written between the years 1461 and 1470, "for the encouragement and direction of the prince in his studies, and to kindle in him a desire to know and understand the laws," a study for which "twenty years are barely sufficient." His chief object is to show the superiority of a constitutional over a despotic government. He describes the antiquity of the customs of England, explains the form of enacting statutes, and shows the difference between our law and civil law, or law dependent upon royal will, in various respects; praising the English procedure, after an exposition of its principles that shows him to have seen into the soul of English political life, and to have been of one heart with the noblest men by whom it was to be developed in the future.

CHAPTER X.

WHEN the line of the poets has been traced from Chaucer onward to the date last reached, I shall have finished that part of my narrative which tells the story of the English mind before there was a printing-press to aid in the diffusion of its utterance. Now and then we may hereafter glance back to connect a few omitted facts with later incidents that give them new importance. Some strains of early song will help to illustrate the later and larger development of popular poetry, and some early advances will connect themselves with the revival of scholarship, as we pass out of the days of civil war to the enlargement of the spirit of the people, and study forms and causes of the wonderful development of energetic thought under the Tudors.

When Chaucer died in the year 1400, John Lydgate and Thomas Occleve, the two poets of lower mark who won most fame among those who wrote for the next generation, were men of twenty or thirty. John Lydgate was born in Suffolk, at the small village of Lydgate,¹ six or seven miles from Newmarket. The date of his birth is not known, but he was ordained subdeacon in the Benedictine Monastery of Bury St. Edmunds, in 1389; so that he would hardly have been born later than 1370. He was ordained Deacon in 1393, and Priest in 1397. He spoke of his own "oold dayes" in verse addressed to Abbot Curteys, who died in 1446. In a poem which he called his 'Testament,' where Lydgate wrote

" Witheynne my closet and in my litil couche,
O blissid Jhesu ! and by my beddys syde,
That noon enmy nor no feend shall me touche
The name of Jhesu with me shal ever abyde,"

¹ This fact was first pointed out by Mr. J. O. Halliwell on Lydgate's own authority (MS. Harl. 2251, fol. 283), in the preface to his 'Selection from the Minor Poems of Dan John Lydgate,' published by the Percy Society in 1840.

he said

“Age is crope in, callith me to my grave
To make reknyng how I my time have spent,”

and proceeded to remembrances of misspent time, in the fourteen years of the spring-time of youth, when following the appetites of childhood, “weepyng for nouhte and anone affter glad. He preferred play to learning, and though “somytyme in awe to be scoured” (scourged) he was loth toward school. He would be late at school, excuse himself with a lie,

“Ranne into gardeyns, appels there I stall;
To gather frutes spared hedge nor wall;
To plucke grapes on other mennës vynes
Was more redy than for to say mattynes.”

He enjoyed jesting and scoffing; was readier to count cherry-stones than go to church; loth to go to bed in the evening or to get up of mornings; ready to come to dinner with unwashed hands, casting his Paternoster and Creed at the cook, and deaf to the warnings of his friends. After a little more gravity in censure of the days of childishness when an apple-orchard tempted him as it tempts also the young Lydgates of the day that is, the literary monk tells how he made his profession of religion, but went forward, like Lot's wife, often looking back. Taught lowly bearing and restraint of looks, “of blessed Benet to folowe the doctryne,” he heard all well from “vertuous men relygious and sadde,” and took but little heed. His black habit of religion was worn only outwardly. He did not care to set his foot upon the ladder of the nine degrees of humility. He preferred to holy stories good clear wine, and, as a reckless youth, was one with the first to take disport in the indulgence of the senses.

Then, said the old poet, remembering in age those days of his youth, he saw on a cloister-wall a crucifix, beside which was written, “Behold my meekness, child, and leave thy pride.” This word in his last age, he understood, and so taking his pen he wrote the “little ditty” on the love of Christ, which, thus introduced, is called ‘John Lydgate's Testament.’ There then, again, we see, as we have seen in generation after generation, during the seven centuries between Cædmon and Lydgate, and

have yet to see, the best mind of our country striving Godward. After a spiritual sketch of all that is represented on the crucifix, “thus endeth the Testament of John Lydgate, monke of Bery,” in the last words of the voice that his soul hears from the Cross:—

“Tary no longer, towarde thy herytage
Haste on thy way, and be of right good chere.
Go eche day onwarde on thy pylgremage,
Thynke howe short tyme thou shalt abyde here.

Thy place is byld above the sterrès clere,
None erthly palaes wrought so stately wyse.
Come on, my frende, my brother moost enteere!
For the I offred my blode in sacrifice.”

Such was the spirit in which Lydgate recalled the light-hearted days of boyhood, and of early manhood when he was among the youths ready as any comrade to enjoy the world and avoid irksome restraint.

After studying at Oxford, Paris, and Padua, and, after mastering with special delight the writings of such poets as Dante, Boccaccio, and Alain Chartier, Lydgate opened at his monastery of Bury St. Edmunds a school of rhetoric in which he taught young nobles literature and the art of versifying. He was well read in the lore of the ancients—theologian, of course—and he was a mathematician and astronomer, as well as orator and poet. Ritson,¹ who called him “voluminous, prosaic, and driveling,” “stupid and disgusting,” gave a list of two hundred and fifty-one works, or “elaborate drawlings,” bearing his name.

Dan (Dominus) John Lydgate was a bright, pleasant, and earnest monk, who wrote clear, fluent verse in any style then reputable; but who was most apt at the telling of such moral stories as his public liked. Sometimes he was as prolix, and he always was as musical, as the old romancers who had been satirized by Chaucer in *Sir Thopas*; but he preferred to take his heroes and heroines out of the Martyrology, and he could write cleverly to order, for the library of any monastery, the legend of its patron saint. Since he wrote so much, and almost always as a story-teller, he found many readers; and his

¹ ‘*Bibliographia Poetica*,’ London, 1802, pp. 66-87.

rhyming supplied some of the favourite tales of his time. He turned into smooth English verse the tales of Troy and Thebes. He elevated into an English poem that best of the Latin works of Boccaccio, which tells and moralises tale after tale of the mutations of affairs of men from Adam downward. He sang the tale of St. Alban the English protomartyr, of St. Edmund, and many a saint more. He could catch the strain of popular song, and satirise the greed of money which bars from the poor man the way to justice, as in his 'London Lackpenny,' whereof the measure is enlivened with the street-cries of his time. He could write morality in the old court allegorical style; he could kneel at the foot of the Cross and offer to his God the sacrifice of a true outburst of such song as there was in him. John Lydgate was not a poet of great genius; but he was a man with music in his life. He was full of a harmony of something more than words, not more diffuse than his age liked him to be, and therefore with good reason popular and honoured among English readers in the fifteenth century.¹

Among the pieces in the selection from the minor poems of

¹ I had the good fortune to be young before the old men who resent companionship of youth succeeded in excluding from the British Museum Reading-room those workers under the age of twenty-one whom it could really help to strive to be, through study of the past, the helpers of the future. They are not the true workers, but the men whose time for being useful has gone by unused, by whom the young student, while he is most buoyant with hope, most ardent and impressible, when a day's reading may colour a whole after life, is shut out of our chief storehouse of knowledge. The first purpose of this note was to rebut the accusation of tediousness often laid against Lydgate, with the fact that when I was one of the novel-reading 'boys' in the Museum Library, a MS. of Lydgate, with a long saints' legend, was as pleasant to me as 'Tylney Hall' or 'Peter Simple.' But I cannot touch upon that pleasant memory without protest against the wrong done, since the days of my own youth, by exclusion from the Museum Reading-room of young men between the ages of seventeen and twenty-one. If space be wanted let the testy old men who have borne no fruit to literature, art, or science, who add to our books nothing but bun-crumbs, be got rid of. At no time of my own life did I derive so much benefit from the national library as when of the age of those whom I now see asking in vain for admittance. Yet I read many novels and much poetry. It may be rather an argument against this plea for the young students of a new generation, to add my belief that if I had been shut out as they are from the happy hunting-grounds of literature, the book in which this is a note dedicated suggestively to the Trustees of the Museum, would never have been attempted.

Lydgate which has been formed by Mr. Halliwell¹ as one of the volumes of the Percy Society, is one that celebrates with much minute detail the pageant of King Henry VI.'s entry into London after his coronation; another is of a philosopher's counsel to an old man who desired to marry a young wife, part whereof is—

“Remembre wele on olde January
Which maister Chauceres ful seriously descryveth
And on fresshe May,”

and which includes a tale

“Of Januaries brother, and olde Decembre,
And of dame July.”

There is a balade on the forked head-dresses of the ladies,—but the balade no longer adheres, as it usually did in the time of Chaucer and Gower, to the appointed number of three stanzas and the four line close; the refrain of this “dyté of womenhis hornys” is “Beauté wol shewe, though hornes were away.” Another piece is a poetical application to Duke Humphrey of Gloucester for money, while Lydgate was translating into verse Boccacio's ‘Falls of the Illustrious,’ at his command. He tells the Duke that the bottom of his purse's empty stomach is so turned upside down that there is no leech or apothecary in Bury town who is able to cure it. Another poem is a sketch of a young tosspot called Jack Hare. Another is in ironical praise of the times, with the refrain to each stanza that all this is to show “how that the crabbe gothe forward:”—

“Iche man hathe ynoughe of richesse;
Pore folk fele no grewaunce;
Pristhode livethe in perfitenesse,
And can in lytel have suffisaunce;
Religyon hathe none attendaunce
Unto the worlde, but al upwarde;
To yeve example in substaunce,
How that the crabbe gothe forward.”

Another poem of the same kind has for refrain the suggestion that all is as straight as a ram's horn. Even among Lydgate's short pieces, many are legends, tales, fables, and translated

¹ ‘Minor Poems of John Lydgate.’ Percy Society, 1842.

fabliaux, of which the 'Churl and the Bird' is one of the most notable; others are animations of piety. Lydgate's 'Chorle and the Bird,' afterwards printed by Caxton, was a fable taken, he says, from a "pamflete in Frensche," but this French was a version of the fable from the 'Clerica Disciplinalis' of Petrus Alphonsus. Another of Lydgate's rhymed fables, that of the 'Horse, the Sheep, and the Goose,'¹ was printed afterwards by Wynkyn de Worde. Other of his pieces are rhymed counsels, as on the strength of moderation, and the old saying that measure is treasure, or the way to secure healthy strength:

"That is goode that causithe no damage,
Honest disport that causithe none hyndryng.
Blessid of God is also that langage
That kepithe his tunge fro foward bakbytyng.
And blessed is he that saithe wele of al thyng,
And blessid is he whiche in his poverté
List thanke God voyde all grucchyng
And doth nothyng but it in mesure be."

One piece is entitled 'Make Amendes;' the burden of another is 'Thank God for all.' Of some interest in connexion with what has been said of Miracle Plays, is a metrical description by Lydgate of the 'Procession of Corpus Christi.' Chaucer's warning to wives, at the end of the tale of Griselda, how they should be masterful with their husbands, "lest Chichevache you take," is illustrated by a poem of Lydgate's, which sets forth the old popular mumming of Bycorne and Chichevache. The poet having spoken a few lines, "than shal be portreyed two bestis, oon fatte, another leene." Bycorne is fat because he lives on patient husbands, Chichevache is lean because she feeds on patient wives. The fatte beste called Bycorne saith:

"Of Bycornoyes I am Bycorne,
Ful fatte and rounde here as I stonde,
And in mariage bounde and sworne
To Chivache, as hir husbonde,
Which will nat eete, on see nor londe,
But pacient wyfes debonayre,
Whiche to her husbondes be nat contrayre.
Ful scarce, God wote! is her vitaille,
Humble wyfes she fynt so fewe."

¹ 'The Chorle and the Bird' was printed for the Roxburghe Club in 1818, 'The Hors, the Shepe, and the Ghoos,' for the same club, in 1822.

After Bycorne has said more to this effect, four men come and sing as destined for the maw of Bycorne: "Then shall ther be a womman devoured in the mowthe of Chichevache," crying to all wives to take example by her fate:

"Be the crabbed, voydethe humylité,
Or Chichevache ne wil nat faile
Yow for to swolow in hire entraile."

Then Chichevache speaks and tells how she feeds on women who are "liche Gresield in pacience." But

"—it is more than thritty mayes,
That I have sought from lond to lond,
But yet oon Gresield never I fond."

The piece ends with the speaking of the man whose patient wife has been devoured. Evidently it was written upon the suggestion of the closing lines of the Clerke's Tale, hardly more than thirty years old.

Lydgate wrote for King Henry V. the 'Life of our Lady,' and at request of the Chapter of St. Paul's, a metrical translation of Macabre's 'Dance of Death,' to be inscribed under the several parts of a representation of it in the cloisters of their church. For Whethamstede, Abbot of St. Alban's, Lydgate rhymed the Latin legend of St. Alban about the year 1430; and was paid for translating, writing, and illuminating, a hundred shillings (in present value, say seventy pounds) for a book that, when received, was placed before the altar of the saint. The volume of his poems in honour of Edmund the patron saint of his own monastery of Bury, the "precious charbuncle of martirs alle," was adorned not only with illuminated letters, but with one hundred and twenty illustrative pictures drawn with extreme care, two portraits of King Henry VI. (who had kept Christmas in the Monastery of Bury, and was made a brother of the Chapter), one of William Curteis, Abbot of Bury, and one of Lydgate himself, kneeling at St. Edmund's shrine.¹

Of the larger works of Lydgate, which have been in chief

¹ MSS. Harl. 2278. It was described by Warton in his 'History of English Poetry,' a book to which I am indebted for some of its information about Lydgate's works.

repute, the most important, for the literary influence we shall afterwards find it exerting, is his version of a French version of Boccaccio's best Latin book, that on the 'Falls of Illustrious Men' (and Women).

Of Boccaccio's nine books 'De Casibus Virorum Illustrium,' which, perhaps, suggested the plan of the Tragedies in the Monk's Tale of Chaucer, the first begins with Adam and Eve, followed by a chapter on Disobedience; then tells of Nimrod, followed by a chapter upon Pride; then proceeds to Saturn, Cadmus, Jocasta, Thyestes, Atreus and Theseus, upon whom follows a chapter upon sudden over-credulity. Then comes a group of the sorrowing, who pass by in one brief chapter; next is the tale of Priam and Hector, after that a short chapter against the proud. The story of Agamemnon comes next, followed by the praise of poverty. Then, in a short chapter, a multitude of those who weep; these, like others who came before and others who follow, are represented as appearing to the poet with their sad succession of complaints. The next in the line of the illustrious who fell is Samson, whose story is followed by a rather long chapter upon women. Two groups of wretched and unhappy ones then close the first book. Book II. begins with Saul and, appending now and then to some sketch of a life a chapter of moralities deduced from it, now and then also suggesting the abundance of material by an interpolated chapter of 'Adventus Flentium,' 'Infelices quidem,' 'Querelæ quorundam,' 'Dejecti aliqui,' 'Dolentium concursus,' 'Grandis infelicium turba,'—a plan pursued throughout the work with admirable artistic effect,—Boccaccio proceeds from the story of Saul to the stories (in Book II.) of Rehoboam, Athaliah, Dido, Sardanapalus, Amaziah, Zedekiah, Metius Suffetius, King of the Albans; (in Book III.) Tarquinius Superbus, Xerxes, Appius Claudius, Alcibiades, Hanno, Artaxerxes; (in Book IV.) Manlius Capitolinus, Dionysius of Syracuse, Polycrates, Callisthenes, Alexander of Epirus, Darius, Eumenes of Cappadocia, Olympia of Macedon, Agathocles, Pyrrhus of Epirus, Arsinoe; (in Book V.) Seleucus and Antiochus, Regulus, Syphax of Numidia, Antiochus the Great, Hannibal, Prusias king of Bithynia, Perseus king of Macedon, Pseudo-Philip of Macedon, Alexander Balaus of Syria, Demetrius king of Syria, Alexander Zebina, Jugurtha. In Book VI., which opens with

a colloquy between Fortune and the author, Marius, the three Miseries of Cleopatra, Mithridates, Orodes king of Parthia, Pompey the Great, Cicero, Mark Antony. In Book VII. are Herod king of the Jews, Tiberius, Caligula and Messalina, Nero, Vitellius, the Fall of Jerusalem. Book VIII. opens with Boccaccio sleeping indolently and tempted to the pleasures of life, but incited to worthy labour by a vision of his best and venerated teacher, Francis Petrarch. "Fame," said that famous lover of the laurel, "is for God's own sake to be sought with all one's strength," Boccaccio therefore collected himself and, considering in what ways the insipid are damned, cast off his own detestable desire of ease, and resumed the old work of his pen. After a group of wretched Emperors has passed, he sees and tells of Valerianus, Sapor king of Persia, Zenobia, Diocletian, Galerius Maximianus, Julian the apostate, Rhadagasus king of the Goths, Odoacer of Italy, Arthur of Britain, Rosmunda. The ninth and last book tells of Brunehild queen of the Franks, of Duchess Romilda, Desiderius king of the Lombards, Pope John XII., Diogenes Romanus, Andronicus of Constantinople, Henry VI., son of Barbarossa, Charles of Sicily, with the story of Manfred and Conradin, James, Master of the Templars, and the suppression of the Order of the Templars, Walter duke of Athens, and John of France, taken prisoner at Poitiers. The book closes with a few weepers and a plea for indulgence, especially Boccaccio's wish that laureate Petrarch, his teacher distinguished alike for morality and learning, will excuse and amend its errors; finally, that the proud who sit in high places will open their eyes and ears.

Lydgate says that he translates Boccaccio through the version of a Frenchman, Laurent, that is Laurent de Premierfait, in the diocese of Troyes, an ecclesiastic among whose translations was one of the Decameron for Jeanne queen of Navarre. Laurent began his translation of the 'Falls of Princes' when the French king, John, was brought a prisoner to England. After describing the purpose and use of the book, and his intent to represent it truthfully, Lydgate cries,

"My maister Chaucer with his fressh comedies
Is deed alas, chefe poete of Bretayne,
That sometyme made full pitous tragedies,

The fall of Princes he dyde also complayne,
 As he that was of making soverayne,
 Whom all this lande of right ought preferre,
 Sithe of our langage he was the lode sterre."

This refers to the Monk's Tale, wherein Chaucer recited tragedies chiefly suggested by the book which we shall find hereafter giving some impulse even to our early drama. Presently Lydgate turns from Seneca and Bochas again to his maister, Chaucer, who in his days hath him so well borne

"Out of our tonge tauoyede¹ all rudeness,
 And to reforme it with colours of sweetnesse,
 Wherefore let us gyve hym laude and glory,
 And put his name with poetes in memory."

Then follows the recitation of Chaucer's works to which reference has already been made,² and

"For whiche men shuld of right and equityte
 Syth he in Englysshe in makynge was the best
 Pray unto God to yeve his soule good rest."

In the epilogue to the translation, which does fair justice to the poetical design of the original, Lydgate names the patron for whom it was written, and to whom we have seen him applying for money during its progress.

"Duke of Gloucester men this prince call,
 And notwithstanding his estate and dignite
 His corage never doth appall
 To study in bokes of antiquite;
 Therin he hath so great felicite
 Vertuously him selfe to occupy
 Of vicious slouth he hath the maistry,
 And with his prudence and his manhede
 Truth to susteyne he favour setteth a syde,"

a defender of holy church and a chastiser of all traitors to her. He studyeth ever to have intellygence, redynge of bokes, and among books

"The noble boke of this John Bochas
 Was accordyng in his opinion
 Of great noblesse and reputacion,
 And unto princes greatly necessary
 To yeve example how this world doth vary."

¹ To avoid.

² See p. 221.

It has lost none of its nobleness in Lydgate's version. Both in plan and substance this prose work of Boccaccio's was peculiarly well suited for treatment in verse, and we shall find in Queen Elizabeth's time Lydgate's 'Falls of Princes' a work with a living influence. Lydgate interspersed occasional prologues and balades of his own while he retold the stories, not as a mere rhyming translator, but as a man who had an honest gift of song and felt their poetry. There passes through the reader's mind a funeral pomp of men who have been carried high on fortune's wheel, and then been bruised to death by its descending stroke. The poem warns the mighty to be humble and the lowly to be well content:

"Who clymbeth highest on fortunës whele
And sodaynly to rychesses dothe ascende
An unware turne afore sene never a dele
When he leest weneth maketh him discende.
Fro suche chaunges who may him defende
But they that be with pouert nat dismayde
And can with lytell holde themselfe apayde."

That is the measure and the spirit of the poem. The measure, it will be observed, is that which Chaucer used in the 'Court of Love,' in the 'Assembly of Foules,' in 'Troilus and Cressida,' in the Man of Law's Tale, and the Clerk's Tale of Griselda. This seven-lined stanza of heroic verse, with its odd line in the middle, where it stands as the last of a quatrain of alternate rhyme and first of a pair of couplets, was throughout the fifteenth century the favourite measure of our poets. We shall presently see how it came by its name of "rhyme royal."

The 'Storie of Thebes' is told by Lydgate as another Canterbury Tale. After a sickness he went in a black cope "on palfrey slender, long and lene,"¹ with rusty
Storie of
Thebes.
 bridle, and his man before him carrying an empty pack, to the shrine at Canterbury, and by accident put up there at the inn where Chaucer's pilgrims were assembled. There he saw the host of the Tabard, who thought him lean for a monk, promised him a large pudding, prescribed nut-brown ale after supper with anise, cummin, or coriander seed, at

¹ First printed by John Stow, in his edition of Chaucer's works, published in 1561.

bedtime. But the best medicine is cheerful company. So Dan John supped with the pilgrims, went home with them next day, and contributed for his story the tale of the tragic end of Thebes, making a pause in it when, at nine in the morning, they went down the steep hill at Boughton under Blean. The story is that of the Thebaid of Statius, as it had been manipulated by romancers of the middle ages.

Lydgate's 'Troy Book' is a metrical version from a French translation of the 'Historia Trojana' of Guido delle The Troy Book. Colonne, a Sicilian poet and lawyer of Messina who came to England in 1287 with Edward I., when he returned from his war in Asia. His Trojan history was a version of that ascribed to the Trojan, Dares, a priest of Vulcan who was said to have warned Hector not to kill Patroclus, and after he had passed over to the Greeks was himself killed by Ulysses. A 'Phrygian Iliad' of Dares existed in the time of Ælian (A.D. 230). It was said to be older than Homer's. The Latin prose history of the Fall of Troy by Dares the Phrygian, was preceded by a letter professing to be from Cornelius Nepos to Crispus Sallustius, telling him that he had translated it from the Greek autograph found at Athens. It was usually associated with the six books of the history of the Trojan war, from the birth of Paris to the death of Ulysses, composed, it was said, by Dictys of Gnossus, the companion of Idomeneus, at the request of Idomeneus and Merion, written on tablets of bark in Phœnician characters, buried with him in a leaden box, and disclosed by an earthquake in the 13th year of the reign of Nero, who caused it to be translated into Greek. Out of the Greek, one Q. Septimius Romanus, was then supposed to have translated Dictys into Latin. Dictys and Dares were both cited in the time of Ælian. From these legends, attributed to Dictys and Dares, not from Homer, the mediæval story-tellers got their fables of the Trojan war. For France, in the time of our Henry II., the Anglo-Norman Benoit de St. Maure rhymed and amplified the story in eight-syllabled verse, adding, among other things, the germ of the tale of 'Troilus and Cressida.' This French 'Roman de Troie' was translated even into Greek. It chiefly followed Dictys, and so did the Latin prose romance, or 'Historia

Trojana' of Guido delle Colonne, which became the most popular of all the variations made on the old tale. It was translated into almost every tongue that had a literature, and in England its first versifier, the author of a translation earlier than Lydgate's 'Troy Book,' is now found to have been John Barbour, author of the 'Brus.' Since, in the first book of this narrative, I told of Barbour and the 'Brus,' Mr. Henry Bradshaw has discovered that the old copyist of a MS. of Lydgate's 'Troy Book,' now in the Library of the University of Cambridge, a Scotch MS. once in the Duke of Lauderdale's collection, used two versions of Colonna's 'Historia Trojana' differing in dialect and metre, turning from one to another with the notes "Here endys barbour and begynnys the monk," "Here endis the monk and begynnys barbour." In this way have been discovered two fragments, comprising about 2200 lines of an earlier Troy book than Lydgate's,¹ the very existence of which had passed out of memory. Not only this, but a collection of fifty 'Lives of Saints' in 40,000 lines, has been

¹ The following are the early editions of Lydgate.—Lydgate's 'Troy Book, or 'Hystory, Sege, and Destruccon of Troye,' was first printed by Richard Pynson, in 1513. Of this edition only four copies are known. It was reprinted more accurately, also in folio, by Thomas Marshe in 1555.

In 1614 a modernised version was published in a third folio, with a change of the heroic metre into six-line stanzas, and of the title to the 'Life and Death of Hector.' This has been cited by Fuller and others as a genuine work of Lydgate's, but is generally ascribed to Thomas Heywood.

The Story of Thebes—the additional Canterbury Tale—was printed as Lydgate's in Stow's edition of Chaucer, that of 1561. Wynkyn de Worde printed Lydgate's 'Lytel Treatise of the Horse, the Shepe, and the Goos.' 'The Chorle and the Byrde' was not only printed at Westminster in Caxton's house by Wynkyn de Worde, but reprinted with ten additional stanzas in Ashmole's 'Theatrum Chemicum' as 'Hermes' Bird,' Ashmole supposing that it had been written by Raymond Lully, or at least translated into English by Cremer, Abbot of Westminster, Lully's scholar. Caxton printed Lydgate's system of Divinity, taken from the French, with its historical examples, apologues, and parables, 'the Werke of Sapience.' He printed also Lydgate's 'Lyf of our Lady.' Wynkyn de Worde printed the 'Prouerbes' of Lydgate, also his 'Temple of Glass,' and his rhymed 'Cronycle of all the Kynges Names that have regned in Englande syth the Conquest of Wyllam Conquerour. And sheweth the Dayes of theyr Coronacyon and of theyr Byrthe.' This is printed in a single sheet.

The 'Boke called de John Bochas descriuinge the Falle of Princess Princissis and other Nobles, translated into Englissh by John Lydgate,' was first printed in folio by Richard Pynson in 1494, new editions of it were issued by Pynson in 1527, by R. Tottel in 1554, and by John Wayland in 1558, all folios.

lately discovered by Mr. Bradshaw in the University Library and added to the memorials of Barbour's genius.¹

Lydgate's contemporary, Thomas Occleve, was born about the year 1370. He knew Chaucer, and evidently refers to a personal relation between them when he speaks of himself as Chaucer's disciple. In his earlier days he lived in the Strand at Chester's Inn, one of the buildings pulled down for the site of Somerset House. We know Occleve tolerably well through his chief poem; for the long original introduction to his version of the 'De Regimine Principum' consists wholly of moral reflection on the manners of his time, interspersed with references to his own position in a government office as clerk of the Privy Seal. A volume of Occleve's minor poems² was printed by Mason in 1796 from a MS. bought in 1785 at the auction of Dr. Askew's MSS. Among the poems in this MS. is one of reasoning with Lord Cobham against his Lollardy, there are lines to the Virgin, there is a poetical petition to undertreasurer Somer from Occleve and three other clerks in his office, who ask for their salaries,

"We your servantes Hoccleve, and Baillay,
Hethe and Offorde, yow byseeche and preye,
Hastith our harvest as soone as ye may;
For fere of stormes our wit is aweye:
Were our seed inned, wel we mighten pleye
And us desporte, and synge and make game."

A poem in this collection entitled 'La Male Regle de T. Hoccleve' is a lively caution against youthful excesses, in which the poet represents himself as having been a waster of his days:

"Wher was a gretter maister eek than y
Or bet acqueynted at Westmynstir yate;
Among the taverneres namely,
And cookes? when I cam, eerly or late,
I pynché nat at hem in myn acate,
But paied hem al that they axe wolde;
Wherfore I was the welcomer algate,
And for a verray gentil man yholde."

¹ 'On two hitherto unknown Poems by John Barbour, author of the Brus. Communicated by Henry Bradshaw.' Transactions of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society for 1866.

² 'Poems by Thomas Hoccleve, never before printed: selected from a MS. in the possession of George Mason. With a Preface, Notes, and Glossary.' London, 1796.

And if it happid on the somere's day,
 That I thus at the taverne hadde be,
 When I departe sholde, and go my way
 Hoom to the privee seel, so wowed me
 Hete and unlust and superfluitee
 To walke unto the brigge and take a boot,
 That nat durste I contrarie hem all three,
 But dide all that they stired me, God woot.

And in the wynter, for the way was deep,
 Unto the brigge I dressid me also ;
 And ther the bootmen took upon me keep,
 For they my riot kneewen fern ago :
 With hem I was ytuggid to and fro,
 So wel was him that I with wolde fare.
 For riot paieth largely evere mo ;
 He styntith never, til his purs be bare."

The moral purpose of the poem doubtless led to a half-artistic exaggeration of self-censure. Our best insight into Occleve's life and character is to be had through the long introductory part of his version, in the popular seven-lined stanza, of the

De Regimine Principum.

In the original introduction to this new version of 'the Governail of Princes,' he says,—

"Musyng upone the restles besynesse
 The whiche this troublly world hath ay on honde
 That other thyng than fruyte of bitternesse
 Ne yildeth not, as I kan understonde,
 At Chestres Inne right fast by the Stronde,
 As I lay in my bedde upon a nyght,
 Thought me bireft of slepe the force and myght."

He got up and walked into the fields, where, thinking of the insecurity of wealth and of the heaviness bred by poverty, of which one can have a secure possession, he met a poor old hoary man, whose greeting, for sickly distress of thought, he did not answer. But the old man called to him, "Sleepest thou, man? Awake!" and shook him till he answered at last with a sigh, bidding him go and not increase his grief. The old man bade him talk with him, if he wished ease of his sorrow. Was he lettered?—Yea, somewhat.—Blessed be God. Lettered folk could hear reason, and so 'plukke up thyne hert, I hope I shalle the cure.'—Cure, good man? cure yourself that tremble as you go. You are as full of clap as a mill. You annoy me more than you think. It must be a stronger man than you that shall relieve me.—But, my son, said the old man, it will not hurt you to listen.—Peter! good man, you may talk

here till evening, but all is in vain, such is my pain of encumbrous thought.
—Take counsel and it will mend,

“Woe be to hym that luste to be alone;
For yf he falle, helpe hath he none
To rise.”

He must listen; and first let him tell his grievance. Is it the care of abundance, or the care of poverty, or is he a tormented lover? Say on. You see the beggar is relieved every day, because he shows himself; if he kept close and held his peace he might sit all the day helpless.

“Some man for lakke of occupacioun
Musethe ferther than his witte may streeche,
And all thurgh the fendes instigacioun,
Dampnable erreure holdethe, and kan not lesche
For counseille ne rede, as did a wrecche
Not long agoo, which that for heresye
Convict and brent was unto asshen drye.

My lord the prynce, God him save and blesse!
Was at his dedely castigacioun,
And of his soule hade grete tendirenesse,
Thurstyng sore his salvacioun.”

That is to say, when John Badby, blacksmith or tailor, was brought to the stake, and a barrel was prepared in which to burn him, Henry, then Prince of Wales, spoke to him kindly, and urged recantation; Badby remaining firm was put into the barrel, and the burning fuel was heaped round it. The Prince, moved by his cries of agony, caused the fuel to be cleared from around him, and again, when he was half dead, spoke to him, offering to procure pardon and even a pension. Badby remained firm, the Prince with some anger ordered the fuel to be heaped round him again, and he was burned to ashes as a hopeless heretic.

After having given six stanzas to the burning of John Badby, Occleve makes his old man, in a seventh stanza, say that it is for divines to inquire what has become of the heretic's soul, he knows not,

“But wolde God the Cristes foes ech one
That as he helde were yserved so,
For I am surè there ben many mo.”

When the old man has preached more upon the sin of heresy, Occleve answers that this is not his trouble, he believes in the sacrament of the altar, and in spite of the fiend in all the articles of faith. That rejoices the old man. And now let him not be despised for his weed: great virtue reigneth oft under an old poor habit. Rich dress is fit for worthy men, but it is ill with men who, if they pay for it, spend all they have upon a gown of scarlet twelve yards wide, with pendant sleeves down on the ground, and the fur set therein worth twenty pounds or more. There is no telling from afar, by their dress, a lord from a commoner. “O! lordes, it sitte yow amende this.” By my life there goes no less than a

yard of broadcloth into a man's tippet. Let every lord forbid his men such great array. What is a lord without his attendance?

"I putte caas his foes hym assaile
 Sodeinly in the strete, what helpe shalle he
 Whos sleves encombrous so side trayle
 Do to his lord? He may him not availe.
 In such a caas he is but a womman,
 He may not stonde hym in stede of a man.
 His armes two han nigh ynoughe to done,
 And somewhat more, his sleves up to holde."

The tailors soon will have to go into the fields to shape, and spread, and fold, their boards will be too narrow for the cloth that shall be worked into a gown; the skinner, too, will have to go into the fields, his house in London being too small for his trade. There is more from the old man on this head. "In olde time" things were not so. Duke John of Lancaster had not his garments too wide, and yet they became him wonderfully well. If there were now less waste in clothes virtues would walk more thick among the people.

"Now have thise lordes but litelle nede of bromes
 To sweepe away the filthe out of the strete,
 Setthe side sleves of penylees groomes
 Wole it up likkë, be it drye or wete."

Truth and cleanness in lords' courts have little honour if they come in narrow clothes. But, said the old man, though my clothes are narrow, good son, have of me no disdain. Then he turned from his poverty to his age, and moralised at length upon age and youth; painting the riot of youth, not without living touches that illustrate customs of the time. The poet answered that he did not contemn his poverty or age, but he did not think him able to ease his vexed mind. Already, however, he had been eased and comforted by his wise counsel, and he would seek further relief of him. Tell me, said the old man,—but first, where dwellest thou?

"In the office of the privé-seel I wone.
 To writë there is custùme and wone.
 Unto the seel, and havë twenty yere
 And fourë come Estrèn, and that is nere."

The king, he went on to tell, was gracious enough to him, and had given him an annuity for life of twenty marks. If that were paid, it would stand well enough with him;

"But paiément is harde to gete now adayes,
 And that me putte in many foule affrayes."

If he cannot be sure of his annuity, how shall he be able to live when he serves no longer. If now in his green age, and being in court, he hardly, with great pains, obtains payment, when he is old and out of court his purse may be no more than a sheath for a farthing.

‘ Loo, fader myne, this dullethe me to dethe;
 Now God helpe alle, for but yf he me socoure,
 My future yerès ben like to be soure.

Service is no heritage, and when he can work no more he may suffer the storm after the merry tide. Then he himself proceeds to moralise on the world’s mutability, bids the young honour their elders, knighthood awake and help his brother, the prosperous remember that they stand on ice. He fears in his own future the slipperiness of the world’s friendship.

“ In feithe, fader, my livelode beside
 The annuitee of whiche I above tolde
 May not exceede yerly in no tide
 Six mark.

“ Sixe mark yerely, and no more but that,
 Fadir, to me me thynkethe is fulle lite,
 Consideryng how that I am nat
 In husbondrie not lernede worthe a myte;
 Scarsly knowe I to chare away the kyte.”

Stooping to write has spoilt his back for lading carts or filling barrows. Writing is work that needs mind, eye, and hand. Artificers can talk or sing over their work,

“ But we labouren in travaillous stilnesse.
 We stoupe and stare upon the shepès skyn
 And kepè most our songe and our wordes in.”

Writing also annoys greatly the stomach, the back, and the eyes.

“ What man that twenty yere and more
 In writyng hath contynuede, as have I,
 I dar wele sey it smerteth hym fulle sore
 In every veyne and place of his body.”

That is the poet’s cause of grief.—Is it all? asks the old man.—All.—The grief then is fear of poverty. “For shame! why makest thou all this wo?” Then follows praise of poverty, with reference first to the life of our Saviour, then to philosophy that tells how securely the poor man may sleep of nights with his door unbolted.

A king of Sicily was always served on earthen vessels that he might not forget he was a potter’s son. Scipio Africanus left not enough to pay for his burial. Solomon prayed that he might have neither riches nor poverty, and in that mean the old man held Occleve to stand, for he could feed and clothe himself upon six marks a year.—Yes, he said, but he was not perfect enough to take it so.—Let him be patient then. St. Ambrose quitted the company of a man who never had been unfortunate, lest he should take part in the coming vengeance, and soon after the fortunate man with all his house was swallowed by an earthquake. (A churchman’s recasting of the story of Polycrates.) Churchmen gape

after fat benefices. Now-a-days one church may not suffice to one man.

"But algate he mote have pluralitee
Elles he kan not lyve in no wise.
Ententyfly he kepethe his servise
In court, ther his labour shalle not moule,
But to his curë loketh he fulle foule.

"Thoughe that his chauncelle roof be alle to torne
And on the hye awtere reyne or snewe,
He rekkethe not, the cost may be forborne
Cristes hous to repaire or make newe;
And thoughe ther be fulle many a visciuous hewe
Under his cure, he taketh of it no kepe:
He rekketh not how rusty ben his shepe."

He is loth to dispend "the oynement of holy sermoning." But the poet says the time is past for him to be a priest as he once thought to have been. "Then," he is asked, "art thou a wedded man percaas?"

"Ye, sothely, fader myne, right so I am.
I gased longe first, and waitede faste
After some benefice, and whan none cam,
By processe I weddede me atte laste,
And God it wote it sore me agaste
To bynde me where I was at my large;
But done it was, I take on me the charge."

That is the trouble you spoke of?—Yes.—Then you shall do well enough, said the wise man. God knows every man's intent, and "he for thy best a wyfe unto thee sent." If you had been a priest you would have been like the rest. Thank God that you are as you are. The orders of priesthood and of wedlock are both virtuous. The poet is asked whether his fellows at home have any helper. Yes, they have a good friend called Nemo, and this leads to comment on the injustice of the lords to whom the poor make suit, and how the lords' men take bribes and intercept the payments of the office clerks. The poet, asked wherefore he took a wife, replies, "Onely for love I chees hir to my mate." This raises the question, What is love? and censure of the views of the day against high honour due to marriage. The argument returns to the unpaid annuity. Does not my lord the prince know of you? asks the old man.—"Yis, fader, he is my goode gracious lorde."—Complain to him then, in Latin or French. You of the privy-seal are well practised in them.—Yet, father, of them full small is my taste.—Then you have wasted your time.

"What shalle I callë the? What is thy name?—
'Occlevë, fader myne, men callen me.'—
'Occlevë, sone?'—'Ywis, fader, the same.'—
'Sone, I have herde or this men speke of the;
Thow were acqueynted with Chaucers pardé?'—
'God save his soulë! best of ony wight.'—
Sone, I wole holde thee that I have thee hight.

Althoughe thou sey thou nouthur in Latyne
 Ne in Frensshe canst but smalle endite,
 In Englisshe tungë thou canst wele afyne.'—
 'Truly therof kan I but a lyte.'—

Then write to your Prince in English, says the old man, "write to hym no thyng that sownethe to vice." Since he is your good lord speak humbly to him as his good servant.—Father, I assent, with heart trembling as the aspen leaf.

"But wele away! so is myne hert wo,
 That the honoür of Englisshe tonge is dede,
 Of whiche I was wonte have counseile and rede!

O, maister dere and fader reverent,
 My Maister Chaucers, floure of eloquence,
 Mirroure of fructuous entendement!
 O, universal fader in science,
 Allas! that thou thyne excellent prudence
 In thy bedde mortalle myghtest not bequethe,
 What eyled dethe, allas! why wold he sle the?

O dethe, thou didest not harme singulere
 In slaughtre of hym, but all this londe it smertethe!
 But natheles yit hast thow no powere
 His name to slee, his hye vertu astertethe,
 Unslayne fro the, whiche ay us lygfly hertethe,
 With bookes of his ornat endityng,
 That is to alle this lande enlumynyng.

Hast thou not eke maister Gower slayn,
 Whos vertu I am insufficient
 For to discrive, I wote wele in certayn?"

The old man presently bade the young poet go home to his meat, and not forget what he had said. Occleve in vain asked the old man to dine with him. But he was to be found every day at Carmes mass, about seven o'clock. So the poet went home alone to his meal, and on the morrow he took pen and ink and parchment, and took courage to write to his lord the prince. Then follows, as the rest of the poem, the treatise 'De Regimine Principum,' compiled, he says himself, from a book of that name by Ægidius or Giles de Colonna, the 'Secretum Secretorum' ascribed to Aristotle, and the 'Game of Chess Moralised,' by Jacobus de Cessolis, or Jacques de Cessoles, translated through the French as Caxton's 'Game of Chess.' But the treatise is digested into practical counsel, not without reminder of the unpaid annuity, and towards the end with deprecation of the wars between the Kings of France and England, and an invocation of Peace for the land. Let Christian kings war only on the enemies of Christ.

Minor Poets. The English writers, great and small, had in each generation dwelt upon the just rights of a people and the duties of a king. Besides the greater works that have been named,

there had been in the latter part of Edward III.'s reign a keen satire of the shortcomings of king and court in the form of a prophecy in Latin verse, divided into three parts, containing revelations during three accesses of fever, said to have been written by one John of Bridlington. The author, whose name has doubtfully been called John Ergome, veiled his own personality, and speaking of the past as one who looked into the future, prefaced the prophecy, to which he had given wilfully an air of obscurity, with some suggested guides to its interpretation.

The Ploughman's Tale of some early editions of Chaucer, perhaps written by Thomas Brampton, satirized the wealth and luxury of the prelates and all temporal corruptions of the church, in form of a dispute of a griffon and a pelican for and against the Romish church, the ploughman being arbiter. The griffon at last, on behalf of Rome, attacked the pelican with a force of rooks, kites, buzzards, magpies, and the like. The pelican flew off, but returned with the phoenix, and so cleared the air of the griffon and his followers.

"Jack Upland" condemned in the Roman church Antichrist and his followers, and replied in defence of the Wicliffites to the rejoinder of "Friar Daw Tobias," who attacked him and upheld the honour of the friars.¹

Indeed, the list of minor writers is a long one. Before we look northward brief mention is due to a small company of the poets whom we may see pass in a few sentences, and group, after Boccaccio's fashion, as "*cantatores quidam*."

We begin a long way back that we may not wholly forget Robert Baston, born at Nottingham, a Carmelite, who became prior of his monastery at Scarborough. He is said to have been taken to Scotland by King Edward II. to celebrate the English triumphs, but he was captured by the Scotch, and they required of him as ransom a panegyric upon Robert Bruce. His '*Metra de Illustri Bello de Bannockburn*' were appended by Hearne to his edition of Fordun's *Scotichronicon*.

¹ These pieces will be found in Mr. Thomas Wright's edition of '*Political Poems and Song relating to English History, composed during the period from the accession of Edward III. to that of Richard III.*' in '*Chronicles and Memorials*' issued under the direction of the Master of the Rolls. 2 vols. 1861.

William of Nassyngton, a proctor in the Ecclesiastical Court of York, translated into English rhyme a Latin metrical treatise on the Trinity and Unity, called the 'Mirror of Life.' The translation was made about the year 1418. The original, in several thousand verses, was by John of Waldly, in Yorkshire, an Augustine friar, provincial of his order in England, and active in controversy against Wiclif. Thomas of Elmham wrote a prose history of Henry V.,¹ and a summary of it in Latin verse;² also a history of the monastery of St. Augustine at Canterbury,³ to which he belonged in early life. Afterwards he entered the order of Cluny, and was Prior of Lenton in Nottinghamshire till 1426.

Thomas Brampton, a confessor of the Minorite Friars, wrote in 1414 a metrical version of the Seven Penitential Psalms, which was edited, in 1842, for the Percy Society by Mr. Black, who supposes Brampton to have been also the author of a poem Against Lollardie, printed in Ritson's 'Ancient Songs,' and to have written the Ploughman's Tale.

Hugh Campden, in Henry V.'s reign, translated out of French 'The History of King Boccus and Sydrack, how he confounded his learned men, and in the sight of them drunk strong venym in the name of the trinite and did him no hurt. Also his divynyte, that he learned of the book of Noe. Also his prophesyes, that he had by revelation of the angel. Also his answers to the questions of wysdom both moral and natural, wyth moche wysdom contayned in number 365.'

John Audelay, of the monastery of Haughmond, near Shrewsbury, opposed Wiclif, but desired reform of church abuses. He was blind and deaf. Some specimens of his verse, edited by Mr. Halliwell, have been printed by the Percy Society.⁴

George Ashby, clerk of the signet to Henry VI.'s Queen Margaret, finished in his eightieth year a moral poem called the 'Active Policy of a Prince.' It was for Margaret's son

¹ Printed by Hearne. Oxford, 1727.

² Edited by Mr. C. A. Cole, in 'Memorials of Henry V.'

³ Edited by Mr. Hardwick in the 'Rolls Series of Chronicles and Memorials.'

⁴ 'The Poems of J. Audelay. A specimen of the Shropshire Dialect in the fifteenth century. Edited by J. O. Halliwell, 1844.'

Prince Edward, and honours, in its prologue, Maisters Gower, Chaucer, and Lydgate.

Benedict Burgh, M.A. of Oxford, made archdeacon of Colchester in 1465, prebendary of St. Paul's in 1471, and canon of St. Stephen's Chapel at Westminster in 1476, translated, about 1470, Cato's 'Morals' into English stanzas for the use of his pupil Lord Bouchier, son of the Earl of Essex. This was printed by Caxton (in folio) in 1483, the year of Benedict Burgh's death. He translated also Daniel Church's 'Cato Parvus.' He likewise made an Aristotle's A. B. C., and is said to have finished a metrical version of the 'De Regimine Principum.' that Lydgate, at his death, left incomplete.

George Ripley, a canon regular of the monastery of Austin Friars at Bridlington in Yorkshire, annoyed his abbot and brother canons by his chemical experiments, was allowed by them to change into another order, and became a Carmelite at St. Botolph's in Lincolnshire. He had been a great traveller and was a busy alchemist. He wrote in 1471, and dedicated to Edward IV., a poem called 'The Compound of Alchemie.' In 1476 he wrote another chemical poem, 'The Medulla,' dedicated to Archbishop Neville of York, a believing patron of the alchemists. He died in 1490.¹

Thomas Norton of Bristol, who says that he learnt the art of alchemy in forty days when twenty-eight years old, wrote in 1477 a poem called 'The Ordinal, or Manual of Chemical Art,' which he presented to Archbishop Neville. The poems of Ripley and Norton were printed in 1652 by Ashmole in 'The Theatrum Chemicum.'

Thomas Chestre, who wrote for the minstrels in the reign of Henry VI., englished the 'Lay of Sir Launfal.'

In Scotland, the last writers of whom we spoke were John of Fordun, the author of the prose 'Scotichronicon,' and Walter Bower, who transcribed his Chronicle, interpolated information, and continued it down to the reign of our next notable poet, James I.

Before King James, too, there was a Scottish rhyming chronicler,

¹ His various chemical writings were published (in 8vo.) at Cassel in 1649.

“Be baptisyne Androw of Wyntowne,
Of Sanct Androwe a chanowne,
Regular,”

and prior of one of the five subordinate monasteries of St. Andrew's, that of St. Serf in the island of Lochleven, once a religious house of the Culdees. Andrew of Wyntoun, who was alive in 1419, wrote his ‘Oryginale Cronykil of Scotland’¹

Andrew of
Wyntoun.

“at the instans of a lard
That hade my serwys in his warde,
Schyr Jhone of the Wemys be rycht name,
An honest knycht and of gude fame.”

He crowded into his nine books of ingenious eight-syllabled doggrel a great number of facts and traditions. Thus we find in Wyntoun's Chronicle the early form of the story of the three weird sisters in Macbeth:—

“A nycht he twowcht in hys dremyng,
That syttand he wes besyd the kyng
At a sete in hwntyng; swa
In-til his leisch had grewhundys twa:
He thowcht, quhile he wes swa syttand,
He sawe thre women by gangand;
And thai women than thowcht he
Thre werd systrys mast lyk to be.
The first he hard say, gangand by,
Lo, yhondyr thethane of Crumbawchty.
The tothir woman sayd agayne,
Of Morave yhondyre I se thethane.
The thryd than sayd, I see the kyng.
All this he herd in his dremyng.
Sone eftyre that, in his yhowthad,
Of thyr thanydoms hethane wes made;
Syne neyst he thowcht to be kyng,
Fra Dunkany's dayis had tane endyng.
The fantasy thus of hys dreme
Movynd hym mast to sla hys eme;
As he dyd all furth in-dede,
As before yhe herd me rede,
And Dame Grwok, his emys wyf,
Tuk, and led wyth hyr hys lyf.”

¹ Wyntoun's Chronicle was elaborately edited in 1795 by Mr. David Macpherson from several MSS., especially one of the Royal MSS. in the British Museum, written about the year 1430.

But after the murder of Duncan, Macbeth was for seventeen years a good king, attentive to the church, and

“ All hys tyme was gret plente
Abowndand, both on land and se.”

There is an account of James I. ascribed to William Elphinston, Bishop of Aberdeen, who is said to have been born in Glasgow in 1437, to have been successively ^{William Elphinston.} Bishop of Ross and Aberdeen and Chancellor of Scotland, and who died on the 25th of October, 1514, aged seventy-seven, during the time that James V. was attempting to make him Archbishop of St. Andrew's. Hector Boethius said that Elphinston carefully investigated the history of his country. The only known copy of Bishop Elphinston's MS. 'History of Scotland' was obtained by General Fairfax when in Scotland from Drummond of Hawthornden, and when he returned to England it was lodged in the Bodleian Library.¹ This volume, among the Fairfax MSS. in the Bodleian, is a small folio written about the end of the fifteenth century, containing a copy of the 'Scotichronicon' of Fordun and Bower, with interpolations and additions, and two poems written in the Scottish language of the middle of the fifteenth century. The account given in the MS. of James I. has been edited by Mr. Stevenson, with the other pieces relating to the same subject, for the Maitland Club.

The father of James I. was John, who in 1390 succeeded his father, Robert II., as Robert III. For the nine years closing Robert II.'s life there had been peace with ^{James I. of Scotland.} England after a contest that had lasted for a century, with no longer interruption than the truce after the battle of Neville's Cross, a truce renewed from time to time, and even thus extended through no longer a time than seven years. When Robert III. came to his throne, the Scottish nobles, bred to active use of arms, were turbulent, the King himself throughout his reign was weak of mind and body, his eldest son a profligate, his brother, the Duke of Albany, able, but busy only for himself.

¹ Letter from Wodrow, Nov. 2, 1726, quoted by Mr. Stevenson, in Preface to the 'Life and Death of King James of Scotland,' printed for the Maitland Club in 1857.

The people suffered. The Estates in Parliament assembled, in 1398, sought remedy for the ills of the land, and declared the King and his officers to be answerable. If the King could show that all the blame lay with his officers, then let him do so. The King's eldest son, then first recognised as a duke—the Duke of Rothesay—was made his lieutenant, with full sovereign powers, which the King was deprived of authority to check by countermand. The Duke-lieutenant was to have all his acts as a sovereign minuted, and to be made strictly responsible to the Estates. The same Parliament recognised also the King's brother by the new title of Duke, as Duke of Albany.¹

In 1400 Henry IV., newly made King of England, renewed his claims on Scotland for acknowledgment of vassalage. He marched an army to Edinburgh, but returned without a victory. Then the great Scottish feudal chieftain, Dunbar, Earl of March, transferred his allegiance to England. In 1402 the Douglas made a raid into England, reached Durham, and was carrying his plunder home, when he was met by March and Hotspur at Homildon Hill, and suffered terrible defeat at the hands of the English bowmen. In the same year, 1402, Albany had, with the help of Douglas, sent the Duke of Rothesay to a dungeon, whence he was not long afterwards taken out for burial. Albany then became sole Governor of Scotland; but the weak king had another son, the boy afterwards James I., besides three daughters. The Percys were preparing insurrection against Henry IV.; they were in secret alliance with Owen Glendower, who had so headed a Welsh struggle for independence as to be for a time King of Wales. Percy, in defiance of a royal order, released Douglas, and other Scots taken at Homildon; Douglas marched into England, joined Percy, and shared defeat with him at Worcester. Albany had raised an army, and masked his designs, but if he had meant to join Percy he was too late. Albany then favoured a fiction, or maintained the fact, that in Scotland King Richard II. was still living. "The statecraft of the times," says Mr. Burton, "leaves us the alternative, either that Henry of Lancaster produced a spurious dead Richard in St. Paul's, or that Albany kept a spurious live Richard in Scotland."

¹ In the sketch of the political life of James I., I chiefly follow Mr. Burton's valuable 'History of Scotland,' vol. iii. Edinburgh, 1867.

But Henry IV. secured the undoubted possession of a Scottish prince, when in 1405 one of his armed ships captured, off Flamborough Head, the vessel in which King Robert's surviving son James, then a boy of fourteen; was going with suitable attendance to be educated at the Court of France. The seizure was made during a time of truce, but possession of the prince was not for that reason to be given up. It was believed, and no doubt rightly, that Albany himself had contrived to secure the waylaying of the young heir to the throne. In the following year King Robert died, and Albany, Governor by the grace of God,—although the captive prince became King James I.,—was actually sovereign of Scotland.

During the imprisonment of James, in the year 1411, the northern districts of the Scottish Lowlands, exempt from the ravages of English war, were threatened with a descent of Highland marauders, who were gathering in unexampled force under Donald, the Lord of the Isles. The gentry and townspeople collected hastily a small body of determined, well-armed men, under Alexander Stewart, Earl of Mar, who checked the advance of the Highlanders at the Battle of Harlaw. Poems were written upon this battle. Scottish schoolboys of the next generation took sides and played at the Battle of Harlaw. There still remains an old poem upon this battle, of 240 lines, such as

“Gud Sir Alexander Irving,
The much renownit laird of Drum,
Nane in his days was bettir sene,
Quhen they war semblit all and sum;
To praise him we sould not be dumm.”

Harlaw remained the name of a tune in the beginning of the seventeenth century, and is so cited by Drummond of Hawthornden, in Macaronic verse; a “*piperlarius heros*”

“*Præcedens, magnamque gerens cum burdine pipam*
Incipit Harlai cunctis sonare Batellum.”

The Regent Albany died, eighty years old, in the year 1409, when James I., prisoner still, was twenty-eight years old. Albany was succeeded as governor by his son Murdoch, who had also been a prisoner to England, but whom his father had known how to recover. James, at the Court of England, was at that

time receiving a certain honour from King Henry V. He had shown his genius, he had been liberally educated, crooked use had been made of him politically in the French war, but there was a wish to attach him, able as he was, to the English crown, and English policy favoured the genuine love that had sprung up between him and Jane Beaufort, daughter of the Earl of Somerset, the late King's brother; niece, therefore to Henry IV. and first cousin to his son and successor. Through that love James obtained his liberty. Married to Lady Jane with royal state, he was allowed to proceed to his kingdom, and was crowned at Scone in May of the year 1424. But Henry of England paid his cousin's marriage portion with a fourth part of a fine of forty thousand pounds levied upon the released prisoner as payment for his maintenance.

Few poems deserving permanence in literature, yet almost unread, are better known by repute than that in which this captive King sang of his love. He sang according to the fashion of the day, and with so much honour to himself that the common seven-lined stanza which he followed—a familiar and favourite one with Chaucer, and with Lydgate, Occleve, and all other poets of the generation after Chaucer—was thenceforth, because enamoured Majesty had used it, called, as it still is called, rhyme royal.

The King's Quair

(i. e. Book) in six cantos, opens with the poet in bed at midnight reading Boethius, of whose 'Consolations of Philosophy' he represents the spirit in his verse. When his eyes smarted with study he lay down, thinking of the wheel of Fortune, how she had been to him in his tender youth a foe and then a friend:

“ Forwakit and forwallouit thus musing,
Wery for-lyin, I lestnyt todaynlye,
And sone I herd the bell to matins ryng,
And up I rase, na langer wald I lye;
Bot now how trowe ye suich a fantasye
Fell me to my mynd, yt ay me thoht the bell
Said to me, Tell on, man, quhat the befell.”

Presently, therefore, he sat down:

“ And furth withall my pen in hand I tuke
And maid a + and thus began my buke.

Then he ends his first canto with an image of a ship among black rocks with empty sail, which he feels evidently as an image of his life, crying:

"—quhare is the wind sul blowe
Me to the port quhare gyneth all my game?"

but which he interprets as the difficulty he finds at the beginning of his little treatise.

The second canto begins delicately but conventionally with two stanzas describing spring. Then the poet tells how, when he was three years past the state of innocence (in fact when he was fourteen years old) he was captured at sea by enemies while on the way to France, and brought into their country, where he was "in strayte ward and in strong prison," and where he bewailed his "dedely lyf, full of peyne and penance." He argued with those about him that,

"The bird, the beste, the fisch eke in the see,
They live in fredome everich in his kynd;
And I a man, and lakith libertee.
Quhat sall I seyne, quhat reson may I fynd—
That fortune suld do so?"

While thus a distressed prisoner, he says:

"My custom was on mornis for to rise
Airly as day. O happy exercise!
By the come I to joy out of turment!"

It did him good to look out of his window at a garden made beside the tower wall, with thick green arbours in each corner and shady alleys:

"And on the smale grene twistis sat
The lytil suete nyghtingale, and song
So loud and clere the ympnis consecrat
Of luvis use, now soft now lowd among,
That all the gardynis and the wallis rong
Ryght of thaire song, and on the copill next
Of thaire suete armony, and to the text:

Worscheppe ye that loveris bene this May,
For of your bliss the kalendis are begonne,
And sing with us, Away, Winter, away,
Come, Somer, come, the suete seson and sonne!
Awake, for schame! that have your hevynis wonne,
And amorously lift up your hedis all,
Thank lufe that list you to his merci call."

And as he watched the birds hopping from bough to bough in their new feathers, he thought to himself "Quhat lufe is this that makis birdis dote?" Is all we read of it feigned fantasy? If Love be a lord to "bynd and louse and maken thrallis free," then he would seek grace to be one of his servants. Therewith the poet, casting down his eye again, saw walking under the tower, newly come to make her morning orisons,

"The fairest or the freshest younge floure
That ever I sawe methought before that houre,

For quhich sodayne abate, anon astert
The blude of all my body to my hert."

Only by letting his eyes fall, of free will he became her thrall, for there was no token of menace in her sweet face. He drew in his head, leaned out again,

"And saw hir walk that verray womanly,
With no wight mo, but only women tueyne."

Was she Cupid's own princess, or the goddess Nature herself? He dwells on her lovingly, describes her golden hair and rich attire, the pearl network and the precious stones, the chaplet on her head "of plumys partit rede and quhite and blewe." Doubtless because it is Jane Beaufort whom he loves, he says of the plumes that they were

"like to the floure jonettis
And other of schap, like to the floure jonettis ;
And, above all this, there was, wel I wote
Beautee eneuch to make a world to dote."

By a small gold chain about her neck there hung a ruby heart, that seemed to lie burning like a spark of fire on her white throat. Her light white morning robe, clasped negligently, was halfling loose for haste,

"—— to suich delyte
It was to see her youth in gudelihed,
That for rudeness to speke thereof I drede."

The delighted poet prayed to Venus for help, envied her little dog that with its bells played on the ground beside his lady, chided in six stanzas the nightingale for being silent, for not singing now to make her cheer. "Here is the time to syng, or ellis never." If he clapped his hand the bird would fly, if he was silent she would sleep, if he cried she would not know what he said ;

"But blawe wynd, blawe, and do the levis schake,
That sum tuig may wag and make her to wake."

With that she sang, and the poet made for his heart's queen a ditty of one stanza to her music. Then he interpreted the singing of the birds. But when the lady had walked a little while under the sweet green boughs, she turned her fair fresh face, as white as any snow, "and furth her wayis went." The poet then lamented all day long till, at evening, wearied out with grief,

"To the cold stone my hede on waye
I laid and lenit amaisit verily ?
Half-sleeping and half-suoun, in such a-wise
And quhat I mat I will you now deuise."

So ends the second canto ; and accordingly he proceeds to tell in the third how it seemed to him that a dazzling light came in at the window whereat he leant, and a voice said, "I bring thee comfort and heal, be not afraid." The light went out, and then he passed unhindered out of

his prison door, and was raised by both arms into the air "clippit in a cloud of crystall clere and faire." So he was lifted up through sphere and sphere into a great chamber, where were many a million of lovers, whose chances are told in divers books, whose adventures and great labours he saw written about their heads; martyrs and confessors "ech in his stage and his make in his hand." After seeing Goodwill, Courage, Repentance, different kinds of lovers, and Cupid with bright wings, all plumed, except his face, and with three divers arrows, the poet came to the retreat of Venus, who had Faircalling for usher, and Secrecy her thrifty chamberlain. He made his plaint to Venus and asked mercy of her. She bade him patiently abide and truly serve. He is no worthy match for his lady, but she will send him to Minerva, and he must obey her counsel, and when he goes back to earth let him ask the men there resident how long they will neglect her laws. Where, for shame, are the new songs, the fresh carols and the dance, the lusty life, the many change of game? Bid them repent in time and mend their life.

In the fourth canto the poet is taken to the palace of Minerva, where Patience is porter and Hope is his guide. Minerva bids him base his love on virtue, be true and meek and steadfast in his thought, doing fit service to his lady in word and work, and so abide his time. Fie on those who deceive women as the fowler snares the bird. It is hard nowadays, to trust; but let him open his heart and he shall have true counsel if his heart be grounded, firm, and stable in God's law. Then the poet declares in three stanzas that his love is pure as his desire is great.

"Desire, quod she, I nyl it not deny
So thou it ground and set in Cristin wise."

Being by few words further satisfied on this, the goddess of wisdom refers to the doctrines of Predestination and Freewill, and speaks of Fortune, whose help he is bidden next to seek.

In the fifth canto the poet tells how he went in quest of Fortune, over a pleasant plain by the flowery banks of a river. There was a highway between long rows of trees, and there were beasts of many kinds, lion and lioness, panther, squirrel, ass, ape, porcupine, lynx, unicorn, and many more, and presently in a round walled place he found Fortune dwelling on the ground, her wheel before her, and underneath it a deep, ugly pit. After an allegorical picture of Fortune, and the fates of those whom he saw climbing on her wheel, the poet says that Fortune called to him by name, and smiling, asked him playfully, "Quhat dois thou here? quho has the hider sent. Say on anon, and tell me thyne entent." After a short dialogue with Fortune, who says to him

"Wele maistow be a wretchit man callit
That wantis the comfort y^t suld thy hert glade
And has all thing within thy hert stallit,
That may thy youth oppressen or defade."

He is placed on her wheel, where let him take heed,

"For the nature of it is euermore
After ane hicht to vale, and geve a fall,
Thus quhen me likith vp or down to fall."

Farewele quod sche, and by the ere me toke
So earnestly, that therewithal I woke."

The next canto of the King's Quair, the sixth and last, opens with a fine reference to the Emperor Hadrian's 'Animula, vagula, blandula,'

"O besy goste, ay flikering to and fro,
That never art in quiet nor in rest,
Till thou cum to that place that thou cam fro,
Quhich is thy first and very proper nest;
From day to day so sore here artow drest,
That with thy flesche ay waking art in trouble,
And sleeping eke, of pyne so has thou double."

He rose from his uneasy sleep—the half-sleep, half-swoon in which, after a day of weeping in his prison, he had seen the visions described in the three preceding cantos—and went to the window, where a white turtle-dove (the bird of Venus) alighted on his hand and, turning to him, showed in her bill a fair branch of red gilliflowers with their green stalks, which had written in gold on every leaf:

"Awake! awake! I bring, lufar, I bring
The newis glad, that blisfull ben and sure,
Of thy comfort. Now lauch, and play, and sing,
That art betid so glad an auenture:
For in the hevyn decretit is the cure."

The bird presented to him the flower, and with spread wings went forth. He took the flower up, read it a hundred times, and pinned it up at his bed's head. Fortune has borne herself so well with him that he will exert his wit to recompense her, now that he is come again to bliss with her that is his sovereign.

Why, asks the poet then in an epilogue, should he write so much of an event so small? Because he has passed by it from hell to heaven,

"And euery wicht his awin suete or sore
Has maist in mynde, I can say you no more."

And so he prays to Venus above for her grace upon all true lovers, and for the dull hearts that they may mend their lives and advance their souls with this sweet lore. He ends then with a tender strain of true love for "this flower." He thanks the prison wall from which he had looked forth and leaned.

"And thus befell my blissfull auenture,
In youth of lufe, that now from day to day
Flourith ay newe, and yit firther I say."

The flower of that true love never withered. There is a passage among these closing lines in which King James says of his wife:

"And thus this floure . . .
So hertly has unto my help attendit,
That from the deth hir man sche has defendit."

There is a sad reading of those lines into literal forecast. At the murder of James, says Hawthornden, "having struck down the King, whom the Queen, by interposing her body, sought to save, being with difficulty pulled from him, she received two wounds, and he with twenty-eight was left dead."

At the close of the whole poem, the "excusation of the author" represents him, king though he be, acknowledging his masters in three poets whose royalty is more to him than the inheritance of worldly rank.

"Unto impnis of my maisteris dere,
Gowere and Chaucere, that on the steppis satt
Of rethorike, quhill thai were lyvand here,
Superlative as poetis laureate,
In moralitee and eloquence ornate,
I recommend my buk in lynis seven,
And eke thair saulis unto the blisse of hevin.

Beseching God for to geve me grace
Bokes to compyle of moral vertue
Of my maister Lidgate to folowe the trace,
His noble fame for laude and renue,
Whiche in his lyfe the slouthe did eschue;
Makyng great bokes to be in memory,
Of whose soule I pray God have mercy."

King James I. went home to his Scotch throne in 1424. He applied his English training at once to the reform of Scottish law. "It is here," says Mr. Burton, "that the practical statute law of Scotland may be said to begin." Statutes were passed by his Parliament in almost every year of his reign. The laws also were to be promulgated in the language of the people. There was survey and valuation of property with a view to taxation. There was—unwelcome to many lords—careful inquiry into titles. Weights and measures were regulated; a standard of coinage was established. One of the great wants of England, dwelt upon emphatically by English poets and reformers, was supplied by the provision that "if there be any poor creature that, for default of cunning and dispenses, cannot or may not follow his cause, the King, for the love of God, shall ordain that the judge before whom the cause shall be determined purvey and get a lele and a wise advocate to follow such poor creature's cause."

While the king dealt thus mercifully with his subjects, he was resolved also to strike two rough blows for the securing of his kingdom. Eight months after his restoration he arrested the

ex-Regent Albany, his sons, and twenty-six of the leading nobles. The nobles afterwards were set free, but Albany and his sons were tried, condemned, and executed. He also lured into his power Donald and fifty other of the Highland chiefs, seized and imprisoned them, and executed those whom it was thought prudent to get rid of. Donald was spared, but he renewed the rebellion. When he was compelled to sue for pardon, others maintained the strife till James, by a firm effort, raised a force which they well knew to be too strong for them. A daughter born to James and his wife Jane in the year after their marriage became, at the age of thirteen, wife to the young Dauphin of France, afterwards Louis XI.

Meanwhile the measures that enlarged the liberties and privileges of the people pressed upon the feudal rights of James's nobles. His inquiries into titles had alarmed them. The lands forfeited by the Earl of March by his treason in transferring allegiance to England were, after a full parliamentary inquiry, maintained to be forfeit by decision of the three Estates. Decision of a legal question caused the Earldom of Strathearn to pass from Malise Graham to Robert Stewart, Earl of Athole. Rough nobles felt their feudal rights abridged, their titles liable to question. The personal irresponsibility they had enjoyed under a weak government was checked by the strong will of a King trained to respect those English laws which had a few years afterwards their eulogist in Sir John Fortescue. Sir Robert Graham had in the Scottish Parliament strongly-denounced the King's encroachments on the nobles, and called him a tyrant. He was banished for this or for other acts of his, and went among the Highlanders, who were kept in subjection only by the King's strong arm and were ready for any act of vengeance.

The King kept Christmas 1436 at the monastery of the Black Friars in Perth, within reach of his Highland enemies. He was repeatedly warned of his danger, but was of a fearless temper. On the 20th of February he was at the close of the day loosely robed, chatting before the fire of the reception-room with the Queen and her ladies. Three hundred Highlanders, with Graham at their head, broke that night into the monastery. Bolts and locks had been tampered with. It was then that a

Catherinè Douglas, finding that the great bolt of the chamber door had been removed, thrust her arm through the staples, and suffered it to be crushed while time was gained for the King's escape into a sewer-vault below. The flooring was replaced, and the Highlanders, not finding the King, would have retired, but one who suspected the way of escape caused the floor to be searched. James I. was discovered, and was killed by sixteen wounds in the breast alone. Although unarmed he defended himself well, leaving the mark of his grip on those of his murderers with whom he grappled. His wife, who sought to shelter him, was wounded in the struggle. There remained only a six-year-old son to be the King's successor. But the child's father had been the friend of his people; the citizens of Perth hunted the murderers, caught them, and killed them with barbarous, protracted torture.

In all this turbulent tale there is evidence of that stir of thought in a contest of principles which, when it appeals to a desire for liberty on both sides, however wild its form often may be, brings out the best expression of a nation's mind. The way was being prepared in James's reign for a bright period of Scottish literature. It may be that they are right who ascribe to this King James, and not a later one, the famous old Scottish poem in twenty-three stanzas which humorously describes rustic merry-making, dancing and fighting at Christis Kirk of the Grene, or the poem of like character that sings how

“Than they come to the towne's end
Withouten more delay,
He before and she before,
To see wha maist was gay.
All that luiket them upon
Leuch fast at their array;
Some said the Queen of May
Was come
Of Peebles to the Play.”

Blind Harry, or Henry the Minstrel, who sang the exploits of Wallace, is the connecting link between King James I. and the strong days of Scottish literature which corresponded in time to the reign in England of Henry VII. and the first part of the reign of Henry VIII. Blind Harry, who, though he calls himself a rustic, could read Latin and French,

Blind Harry.

produced his 'Wallace' about the year 1460. He was the first Scottish poet who followed Chaucer in use of heroic couplet, and he calls his poem a chronicle derived chiefly from the Latin of John Blair, who had been Wallace's schoolfellow:—

Wallace and he at hayme in scule had beyne :
 Sone eftirwart, as verité is seyne,
 He was the man that principall wndirtuk,
 That first compild in dyt the Latyne buk
 Off Wallace lyff, rycht famouss of renoune ;
 And Thomas Gray persone off Libertoune.
 With him thai war, and put in story all,
 Offt ane or bath, mekill of his trauaill."

Blind Harry was more patriot than poet, but where the spirit
 of the patriot is active the life-blood of song flows warm.
 William Dunbar. This minstrel was alive in 1492, when there was a young
 poet in Scotland ready to make good his right to live in story
 as the next poet of great mark who sang after Chaucer, William
 Dunbar.

I see, sang Dunbar in a day of sickness,

"I see that makars amang the lave
 Plays here their padyanes, syne goes to grave,"

and in his 'Lament for the Makars' (poets) whom he has
 known and death has taken, he names many of those who
 make a part of the next wave of thought that we see rolling up
 to break in music on the sands of time.

"In Dunfermline he has ta'en Broun,
 With Maister Robert Henrisoun ;
 Sir John the Ross embraced has he
 Timor mortis conturbat me.

* * * *

And he has now ta'en last of aw,
 Gude, gentle Stobo, and Quintine Schaw,
 Of whom all wichtis has pitie :
 Timor mortis conturbat me.

Sen for the Death remeid is none,
 Best is that we for death dispone,
 After our death that live may we :
 Timor mortis conturbat me."



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